Lord Of Mysteries

CLOWN

WRITTEN BY

Cuttlefish that loves diving

Ø
THE FOOL

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Edited by: ***MidnightSoul***

XII
THE HANGED MAN

CHAPTER 1: CRIMSON

Painful!

How painful!

My head hurts so badly!

A gaudy and dazzling dreamworld filled with murmurs instantly shattered. The sound asleep Zhou Mingrui felt an abnormal throbbing pain in his head as though someone had ruthlessly lashed at him with a pole again and again. No, it was more like a sharp object pierced right through his temples followed by a twist!

Ouch... In his stupor, Zhou Mingrui attempted to turn around, look up, and sit up; however, he was completely unable to move his limbs as though he had lost control over his body.

From the looks of it, I'm still not awake. I'm still in a dream... Who knows, perhaps the next scene will be of me thinking I'm already awake, but in fact, am actually still sleeping...

Zhou Mingrui, who was not unfamiliar with similar encounters, tried his best to focus in order to escape the shackles placed upon him by the darkness and confusion.

However, while still in his reverie, whatever will he could summon was ethereal like a fleeting fog. He found his thoughts difficult to control and introspect. No matter how much he tried, he still lost his focus as random thoughts surfaced in his mind.

Why would I suddenly have such an excruciating headache in the middle of the night?

And it's really painful!

Could it be something like a cerebral hemorrhage?

*F**k, don't tell me I'm going to die young?*

I need to wake up! Now!

Eh? Why doesn't it seem to hurt as much as before? But why does it still feel like a blunt knife is slicing through my brains...

From the looks of it, I won't be able to continue sleeping anymore. How am I to show up for work tomorrow?

Why am I still thinking about work? This is some authentic headache. Of course I have to take time off! I don't have to worry about my manager's grumblings!

Hey, putting it that way, it doesn't seem too bad. Hehe, I can end up getting some spare time for myself!

Throbbing pain inundated Zhou Mingrui, allowing him to slowly accumulate immaterial strength until he was finally able to move his back and open his eyes. He finally broke free from his reverie.

His vision first blurred before it was screened by a faint crimson red. All he could see was a study desk made of burly wood in front of him. Right in the middle was an opened notebook with coarse, yellow pages. The title was eye-catchingly written with strange, deep black lettering.

To the left of the notebook was a stack of neatly arranged books, numbering about eight. The wall on their right was inset with grayish-white pipes with wall lamps connected to them.

The lamp had a classical Western style to it. It was about half the size of an adult's head with an inner layer of transparent glass and an exterior gridded with black metal.

Diagonally beneath the lamp was a black ink bottle shrouded in a pale red glow. Its embossed surface formed a blurry angel pattern.

In front of the ink bottle and to the right of the notebook sat a dark-colored pen with a fully circular body. Its tip shimmered with a faint glint while its cap rested right beside a brass revolver.

A gun? A revolver? Zhou Mingrui was completely taken aback. The things laid before him were alien to him. It looked nothing like his room!

While feeling shocked and confused, he discovered that the desk, notebook, ink bottle, and revolver were covered in a layer of crimson 'veil,' a result of the light shining from the window.

Subconsciously, he looked up and shifted his gaze up bit by bit.

In midair, a crimson moon hung high above the backdrop of a 'black velvet curtain,' glowing in silence.

This... Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified as he stood up abruptly. However, before his feet fully straightened, his brain protested with throbbing pain. It made him temporarily lose his strength as he fell uncontrollably. His buttocks slammed heavily onto the burly wood chair.

Pa!

The pain did little. Zhou Mingrui stood up again by propping himself up. He turned around in a fluster as he began to size up the environment he was in.

The room was not very large, with a brown door on each side of the room. Close to an opposite wall was a low wooden bed.

Between the bed and the left door was a cabinet. Its two doors were swung open and beneath it were five drawers.

To the side of the cabinet, there was the same grayish-white pipe on the wall at the height of a person. However, it was connected to a strange mechanical device with exposed gears and bearings in several spots.

Items resembling coal stoves sat in the right corner of the room near the table, along with soup pots, iron pots, and other kitchen utensils.

Across the right door was a dressing mirror with two cracks. Its bottom was made of wood and the patterns were simple and plain.

With a sweep of his gaze, Zhou Mingrui noticed himself in the mirror—the present him.

Black hair, brown eyes, a linen shirt, thinly built, averagelooking features and a rather deep outline...

This... Zhou Mingrui immediately drew a gasp as many helpless and confused guesses surfaced in his mind.

The revolver in ancient European style and the crimson moon that looked different from Earth's moon could only mean one thing!

C-could I have transmigrated? Zhou Mingrui widened his mouth slightly.

He had grown up reading web novels and had often fantasized over such scenes. However, he momentarily found it hard to accept the situation when he found himself in one.

This was probably what it means to love a fantasy [1]? In a minute, Zhou Mingrui had already cursed himself while trying to make the best out of his adverse situation.

If not for the still throbbing headache that made his thoughts high strung but clear, he would have definitely suspected that he was dreaming.

Calm down, calm down, calm down... After taking a few deep breaths, Zhou Mingrui worked hard to stop panicking.

At that moment, as his mind and body calmed down, memories began flooding him as they slowly appeared in his mind!

Klein Moretti, a citizen of the Northern Continent's Loen Kingdom, Awwa County, City of Tingen. He is also a recent graduate from the Department of History at Khoy University...

His father was a sergeant of the Imperial Army who had sacrificed himself during a colonial conflict with the Southern Continent. The bereavement allowance gave Klein the opportunity to study at a private language school and laid the foundation for his admission into university...

His mother was a devotee of the Evernight Goddess. She passed away the year Klein passed the entrance examinations to Khoy University...

He also had an elder brother and a younger sister. They stayed in a two bedroom apartment together...

Their family was not wealthy and its situation could even be described as somewhat wanting. At present, the family was supported solely by the elder brother who worked at an import and export company as a clerk...

As a history graduate, Klein grasped knowledge of the ancient Feysac language—deemed the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent—as well as the Hermes language which often appeared in ancient mausoleums as well as text regarding sacrificial and praying rituals...

Hermes language? Zhou Mingrui's mind stirred as he reached out to rub his throbbing temples. He cast his gaze toward the table at the opened notebook. He noticed that the text on the yellowed paper turned from strange to alien, before turning from alien to something familiar. It then turned into something readable.

It was text written in Hermes language!

The dark ink wrote the following:

"Everyone will die, including me."

Hiss! Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified. He instinctively leaned back in an attempt to widen the distance between him and the notebook, as well as the text on it.

Being very weak, he nearly fell down but managed to extend his hands in a fluster to hold onto the edge of the table. He felt that the surrounding air was turbulent as though there were faint murmurings resounding in it. The feeling was akin to hearing horror stories being recounted by elders when he was young.

He shook his head, believing that everything was an illusion. Zhou Mingrui found his balance and shifted his gaze from the notebook as he heaved for breath.

This time, his gaze landed on the shimmering brass revolver. He suddenly had a question arise in him.

With Klein's family situation, how can they have the money or means to buy a revolver?

Zhou Mingrui could not help but frown.

While in deep thought, he suddenly discovered a red handprint to the side of the table. Its color was deeper than the moonlight and much thicker than the 'veil.'

It was a bloody handprint!

A bloody handprint? Zhou Mingrui subconsciously flipped his right hand that had been holding the edge of the table. Looking down, he saw that his palm and fingers were covered in blood.

At the same time, the throbbing pain in his head continued. Although it had weakened a little, it continued incessantly.

Did I smash my head open?

Zhou Mingrui guessed as he turned around and walked towards a cracked dressing mirror.

A few steps later, a black-haired figure of medium build and brown eyes appeared clearly in front of him. The person had a distinct scholarly air to him.

Is this the present me? Klein Moretti?

Zhou Mingrui was stunned momentarily. Since there was insufficient lighting at night, he failed to see something clearly. He continued forward until he was just a step short from colliding with the mirror.

Using the crimson veil-like moonlight as illumination, he turned his head and examined the corner of his forehead.

A clear reflection appeared in the mirror. His temple had a grotesque wound with burn marks along its periphery. Blood stained the wound's surroundings and there were grayish-white brain juices squirming slowly within.

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1. This is actually a proverb that describes Lord Ye. In ancient times, Lord Ye was very fond of dragons, adorning his whole palace—beams, pillars, doors, windows and walls—with drawings and carvings of them. When a real dragon in heaven heard of this, it was deeply moved by his infatuation and paid him a visit. When Lord Ye saw the real dragon thrusting its head in through the window of his study and its tail moving in his palace, he was frightened out of the house for his life. Clearly, what Lord Ye loved was not a real dragon.

CHAPTER 2: SITUATION

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Zhou Mingrui reeled back in fear at the sight that greeted him. It was as though the person in the dressing mirror was not himself, but a dessicated corpse.

How could a person with such grievous wounds be still alive!?

He turned his head in disbelief again and checked the other side. Even though he was a distance away and the lighting was poor, he could still see the penetrating wound and dark red blood stains.

"This..."

Zhou Mingrui drew a deep breath as he tried hard to calm himself.

He reached out to press his left chest and sensed his racing heart that exuded immense vitality.

He then touched his exposed skin. Beneath the slight coldness was flowing warmth.

When he squatted down and after verifying that his knees could bend, Zhou Mingrui stood up again and calmed down.

"What's happening?" he muttered with a frown. He planned to inspect his head injury seriously once more.

He took two steps forward and suddenly paused. The moonlight of the sanguine moon was relatively dark, so it was insufficient for his 'serious inspection.'

A memory fragment triggered as Zhou Mingrui turned his head to look at the grayish-white pipes and the metallic-gridded lamp on the wall right beside the study desk.

This was the most common gas lamp of the times. Its flame was stable and its illumination capabilities were excellent.

With Klein Moretti's family situation, even a kerosene lamp was a dream, much less a gas lamp. Using candles was most apt for their standing and stature. However, back when he burned the midnight oil four years ago to be admitted into Khoy University, his elder brother, Benson, felt that it was an important matter which their family's future depended upon. Therefore, he insisted on creating conducive studying conditions for Klein even if it meant taking on debt.

Of course, Benson, who was literate and had worked for several years, was not a rash person who did not think of the consequences. He had quite some tricks up his sleeve. He reasoned with the landlord to 'raise the apartment's standards by installing gas pipes to improve the likelihood of rentals in the future.' The landlord was convinced and provided the money to complete the basic modifications. Then, using the convenience of working at an import and export company, he purchased a brand new gas lamp which was nearly at cost price. In the end, all he needed was to use his savings and did not need to borrow money.

After the memory fragment flashed past his mind, Zhou Mingrui came to the desk where he turned the pipe's valve and began twisting the gas lamp's switch.

With a sputtering sound, a spark sounded from friction. Light did not descend upon Zhou Mingrui as he had expected.

He twisted the switch a few more times, but all the gas lamp did was sputter and remain dark.

"Hmm..." Retracting his hand and pressing on his left temple, Zhou Mingrui sought for the reason by rummaging through his memory fragments.

A few seconds later, he turned around and walked toward the door. He arrived at the machine installation which was similarly inset into the wall and had grayish-white pipes connected to it.

This was a gas meter!

After seeing the exposed gears and bearings, Zhou Mingrui took out a coin from his trousers' pocket.

It was dark yellow in color and had a bronze shimmer to it. The front of the coin was engraved with a portrait of a crownwearing man, and there was a '1' on a clump of wheat on the back.

Zhou Mingrui knew that this was the most basic currency of the Loen Kingdom. It was called a copper penny. One penny's purchasing power was roughly three to four yuan before his transmigration. Such coins had other denominations such as the five pence, a halfpence and a quarter-pence. Despite the three types, the denominations were not in small-enough units.

In everyday life, one had to buy several different things just to spend a single coin from time to time.

After flipping the coin—which was only minted and circulated after King George III ascended to the throne—a few times, Zhou Mingrui inserted it into the gas meter's thin vertical 'mouth.' *Clink! Clang!*

After the penny fell to the bottom of the meter, the sound of grinding gears sounded immediately, producing a short but melodious mechanical rhythm.

Zhou Mingrui stared at the meter for a few seconds before returning to the burly wood desk. He then reached out to twist the gas lamp's switch.

After some sputtering, there was a sharp sound!

A fire plume ignited and rapidly grew. Bright light first occupied the internals of the wall lamp before penetrating the transparent glass, blanketing the room with a warm glow.

The darkness quickly receded as the crimson retreated out the window. Zhou Mingrui felt at ease for a baffling reason as he quickly came in front of the dressing mirror.

This time, he seriously inspected his temple and did not miss a single detail.

After a few rounds of inspection, he realized that apart from the original blood stain, liquid was no longer flowing out of the grotesque wound. It appeared like it had received the best hemostasis and bandaging. As for the slowly squirming grayishwhite brain and the discernible growth of flesh and blood around the wound, it meant that the wound might take thirty to forty minutes, or maybe even two to three hours before it would only leave a light scar.

"The restorative effects that transmigration brings?" Zhou Mingrui curled up the right corner of his mouth as he muttered silently.

Following that, he let out a long sigh. Regardless, he was still alive!

After settling his mind, he pulled open a drawer and took out a tiny piece of soap. He took one of the old and tattered towels hanging by the side of the cupboard and opened the door. He then walked to the public bathroom which was shared by the tenants on the second floor.

Yes, I should clean up the blood stains on my head, or I'll keep looking like a crime scene. It's fine scaring myself, but if I were to scare my sister, Melissa, when she gets up early in the morning tomorrow, it would be quite problematic!

The corridor outside was pitch black. Silhouettes were barely accentuated by the crimson moonlight from the window at the end of the corridor. They looked like a pair of monster eyes that silently observed the living late into the night.

Zhou Mingrui lightened his footsteps as he walked towards the communal bathroom with a shuddering fear.

When he entered, there was even more moonlight, allowing him to see everything clearly. Zhou Mingrui stood in front of a wash basin and turned the tap's knob.

Upon hearing the gushing sound of water, he suddenly recalled his landlord, Mr. Franky.

As water was included in the rent, this short and thin gentleman who wore a top hat, a vest, and a black suit, always inspected the bathroom actively to take note of any sounds of flowing water.

If the water gushed too loudly, Mr. Franky would ignore all of his gentlemanly traits by flailing his walking stick and striking the bathroom's door, shouting things like 'Darn thief,' 'Wastage is a shameless matter,' 'I'll remember you,' 'If I see this happen another time, scram along with your filthy luggage,' 'Mark my words, this is the most value-for-money apartment in Tingen City. You will not find a more kindly landlord anywhere else!'

Putting away those thoughts, Zhou Mingrui used a moist towel to clean the blood stains from his face again and again.

After checking himself using the rundown mirror in the bathroom and verifying that all that was left was a hideous wound and a pale face, Zhou Mingrui relaxed. Then, he took off his linen shirt and used a bar of soap to wash away the bloodstains.

At that moment, he knitted his brows and recalled a possible problem.

The wound was too exaggerated and there was too much blood.

Apart from his body, his room likely still had signs of his injury!

After Zhou Mingrui was done with his linen shirt a few minutes later, he briskly returned to his apartment with a moist towel. He first wiped the blood handprint on the desk and then, using the gas lamp's illumination, sought out spots which he missed out.

He immediately discovered that quite a substantial amount of blood had splattered onto the floor beneath the desk. And there was a yellow bullet to the left side of the wall.

"Releasing a round with a revolver pointed at the temple?" After mixing and matching the clues from before, Zhou Mingrui had a rough idea how Klein had died.

He was in no hurry to verify his guess. Instead, he seriously wiped away the blood stains and cleaned up the 'scene.' Following that, he took the bullet and returned to the side of his desk. He opened the revolver's cylinder and poured out the rounds inside.

A total of five rounds and a cartridge shell all had a brass luster to them.

"Indeed..." Zhou Mingrui looked at the empty cartridge shell in front of him and stuffed the rounds back into the cylinder while nodding.

He shifted his gaze to the left and it landed on the notebook's words: 'Everyone will die, including me.' Following that, even more questions arose in him.

Where did the gun come from?

Was it suicide or a faked suicide?

What kind of trouble could a history graduate of humble origins get himself into?

Why would such a suicide method only leave behind so little blood? Was it because I transmigrated in a timely manner and it came with healing benefits?

After pondering for a moment, Zhou Mingrui changed into another linen shirt. He sat on the chair and began pondering over more important matters.

Klein's experience was still not something he needed to concern himself with. The true problem was to figure out the reason for his transmigration and if he could return!

His parents, relatives, best buddies, and friends. The fascinating world of the Internet and all sorts of delicious delicacies... These were reasons that prompted his desire to return!

Click. Click. Click... Zhou Mingrui's right hand was subconsciously pulling out the revolver's cylinder and slamming it back into place, again and again.

Yea, there has not been much difference for me between this period of time and the past. I was just a little unlucky, but why would I transmigrate for no baffling reason?

Bad luck... Yes, I tried a luck enhancement ritual before dinner today!

A thought flashed in Zhou Mingrui's mind, illuminating the memories which were concealed by a fog of confusion.

As a qualified keyboard politician, keyboard historian, keyboard economist, keyboard biologist, and keyboard folklorist, he had always deemed himself as 'knowing something of everything.' Of course, his best buddy would often mock him as 'only knowing a little of everything.'

And one of them was Chinese Divination.

When he visited his hometown last year, he had discovered a thread-bound book titled 'Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts of the Qin and Han Dynasty' at an old bookstore. It looked pretty interesting and could aid him in posturing on the Internet, so he bought it. Unfortunately, his interest was shortlived. The vertical script it used made the reading experience horrible. All he did was flip through the beginning pages before he threw it into a corner.

He had experienced a spate of bad luck in the past month— losing his cell phone, customers running away after cheating him, and mistakes at work. Only then did he suddenly recall the luck enhancement ritual written at the beginning of 'Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts.' Furthermore, the requirements were extremely simple, without any basic foundation requirements.

All he needed was to get four portions of the staple food in his area and place them in the four corners of his room. They could be placed on furniture such as tables and cupboards. Then, standing in the middle of the room, he had to take four steps in a counter-clockwise fashion to make a square. The first step required him to sincerely chant 'The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.' The second step was to silently chant, 'The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.' The third step was 'The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth for Blessings,' and the fourth step was 'The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.' After the four steps were taken, he needed to close his eyes and wait five minutes in his original spot. Only then would the ritual be considered complete.

Since it did not cost him any money, he found the book, followed what was stipulated, and did it before dinner. However... nothing happened back then.

Who would have guessed that he would actually transmigrate in the middle of the night!

Transmigration!

"There is a distinct possibility that it's due to that luck enhancement ritual... Yes, I should give it a try here tomorrow. If it's really because of that, I stand a chance of transmigrating back!" Zhou Mingrui stopped flicking the revolver's cylinder and suddenly sat straight up.

Regardless, he had to give it a try!

He had to attempt a Hail Mary!

After confirming his plan, Zhou Mingrui immediately felt he had a mental crutch. His fear and unease were all swept away into a corner of his mind.

Only then did he have the mood to carefully study Klein's memory fragments.

Zhou Mingrui habitually stood up before turning off the pipe's valve. He watched the wall lamp gradually dim until its flame extinguished before sitting back down. As he subconsciously fiddled with the revolver's brass cylinder, he pressed the side of his head. He slowly recalled his memories in the crimson-dyed darkness as though he was the most attentive viewer in a movie theater.

Perhaps as a result of having a bullet pass through his head, Klein's memories were like shattered glass. Not only were the memories not contiguous, there were many spots which were clearly missing. For example, memories pertaining to how the exquisite revolver appeared in his possession, whether he had committed suicide, or was killed, as well as the meaning of the words 'Everyone will die, including me' on the notebook, or whether he had participated in anything odd two days before the incident.

Not only had these particular memories become fragmented, there were also missing pieces. It was the same even for knowledge he ought to know. In light of the present situation, Zhou Mingrui believed that if Klein were to return to university, it was unlikely he could graduate. This was despite him having left campus just days ago without relaxing one bit.

He needs to participate in the Tingen University's History department interview two days later...

The university graduates of Loen Kingdom do not have the tradition of staying at their alma mater... His mentor had given him a recommendation letter for Tingen University and Backlund University...

...

Through the window, Zhou Mingrui silently observed the red moon setting in the west. The gradual sinking of the moon continued until faint light glowed from the east, dyeing the horizon golden.

At that moment, there was a commotion inside the apartment. Soon, the sound of footsteps approached his door.

"Melissa is awake... She's really as punctual as always." Zhou Mingrui smiled. Due to Klein's memories, seeing Melissa made him feel as though she was really his younger sister.

However, I do not have a younger sister... He immediately contradicted himself.

Melissa was different from Benson and Klein. Her rudimentary education was not completed at the Sunday school classes offered by the Church of Evernight. When she reached schooling age, the Loen Kingdom had enacted the 'Basic Education Law.' A Primary and Secondary Education Committee was established and was specially provided with funding, increasing the kingdom's investment into education.

In less than three years, under the premise that numerous church schools would be incorporated, many public primary schools were established to strictly maintain the principle of religious neutrality. This was to prevent education from involving itself in the conflicts between the Lord of Storms, Evernight Goddess, and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Compared to Sunday school that only cost a copper penny a week, a public primary school's cost of three pence a week appeared rather expensive. However, the former only provided education every Sunday, whereas the latter provided six days of classes a week. In conclusion, the price was so low that it was almost free.

Melissa was different from most girls. From a young age, she enjoyed things like gears, springs, and bearings. Her ambition was to be a steam mechanic.

Having suffered from a lack of culture, Benson, who knew the importance of education, supported his sister's dreams just like how he supported Klein's university education. After all, Tingen Technical School was only considered secondary education. There was no need for her to attend language school or a public school for more knowledge.

In July last year, fifteen-year-old Melissa passed her entrance examinations and fulfilled her dreams of becoming a student at the Tingen Technical School's Steam and Machinery department. As such, her weekly school fees raised to nine pence.

Meanwhile, Benson's company was affected by the situation in the Southern Continent. There was a drastic drop both in profit and business transactions. More than a third of the employees were retrenched. In order to keep his job and maintain their livelihood, Benson could only accept more arduous tasks. He had to work overtime more frequently or head to places with harsh environments. That was what he was occupied with the past few days.

It was not that Klein did not think of helping share his elder brother's burden but being born a commoner and having been admitted into an average language school, he felt a strong sense of inadequacy when he enrolled into university. For example, as the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent, the ancient language of Feysac was something all the children of nobles and of the wealthy class would learn from a young age. In contrast, he only made first contact with it in university.

He faced many similar aspects during his schooling career. Klein nearly gave his all and often stayed up late into the night and woke up early before barely managing to catch up to the others, eventually allowing him to graduate with average results.

Memories regarding his elder brother and younger sister remained active in Zhou Mingrui's mind until he turned the doorknob open. Only then did he jolt awake and remember that he held a revolver in his hand.

This was a semi-regulated item!

It will scare children!

Also, there's still the wound on my head!

With Melissa arriving at any moment, Zhou Mingrui pressed onto his temple and hurriedly pulled open a desk drawer and threw the revolver in before slamming it close.

"What happened?" Melissa looked over curiously when she heard the commotion.

She was still in the prime of her youth. Even though she didn't have much nutritious food to eat, making her face thin and slightly pale, her skin remained lustrous as it exuded the vibes of a young girl.

When Zhou Mingrui saw his sister's brown eyes look over, he forcibly composed himself and picked up an item beside his hand before calmly closing the drawer to conceal the existence of the revolver. He placed his other hand on his temple, the texture confirming that his wound had already healed!

He took out a silver vine-leaf pocket watch and pressed the top gently, causing its cover to flip open.

It was a picture of the siblings' father. It was the most valuable item the Imperial Army sergeant left behind, but being a secondhand item, it would often malfunction from time to time in recent years even though he had gotten a watchsmith to fix it. It had embarrassed Benson who enjoyed bringing it with him to elevate his status many a time, so it was thrown away back at home in the end.

It had to be said that perhaps Melissa did have talent in machinery. After grasping the principles behind the watch, she borrowed the tools from her Technical School to fiddle with the pocket watch. Recently, she even claimed to have fixed it!

Zhou Mingrui looked at the watch's open cover and saw that the second hand was not moving. Subconsciously, he twisted the top dial to wind the pocket watch.

However, despite winding it a few times, he did not hear the sound of taut springs. The second hand remained motionless.

"It looks like it's broken again." He looked at his sister while trying to find a topic of conversation.

Melissa shot him an expressionless glance and briskly walked over to take the pocket watch away.

She stood in her spot and pulled up the button sitting atop the pocket watch. With a few simple turns, the tick-tocking of the second hand sounded.

Isn't pulling the button up usually meant to adjust the time... Zhou Mingrui's expression immediately turned blank.

At that moment, a bell chimed from a faraway cathedral. It chimed six times, sounding distant and ethereal.

Melissa tilted her head to listen to it and pulled the button up once again. Following that, she turned it to synchronize the time.

"It's okay now," she said simply without emotion. She then pressed the top button back and handed the pocket watch back to Zhou Mingrui.

Zhou Mingrui returned a smile politely in embarrassment.

Melissa gave her elder brother a piercing stare before turning to walk to the cupboard. She took her toiletries and towel before opening the door to leave. She headed for the public bathroom.

Why did her expression have a look of disparagement and resignation?

Is it a look of love and concern for a retarded brother?

Zhou Mingrui lowered his head and chuckled. He closed the pocket watch's cover with a click before opening it again.

He repeated this action as his idle thoughts focused on a question.

Klein committed suicide without a silencer. Well, I'll consider it as suicide for now. His suicide should have caused quite a commotion; yet, Melissa, who was just a wall away, did not notice it at all.

Was she sleeping too soundly? Or is Klein's suicide shrouded in mystery to begin with?

Click! The pocket watch opened. *Clack!* The pocket watch closed... Melissa returned from washing up and saw her brother's subconscious act of constantly opening and closing the pocket watch.

Her gaze was once again glazed with exasperation as she said with a sweet voice, "Klein, take out all the remaining bread. Remember to buy fresh ones today. There's meat and peas too. Your interview is soon. I'll make you mutton stewed with peas."

As she spoke, she moved a stove out from a corner. With some charcoal, she boiled a pot of hot water.

Before the water boiled, she opened the cupboard's lowest drawer and took out what seemed like a treasure—a can of inferior tea leaves. She threw about ten leaves into the pot and pretended that it was real tea.

Melissa poured two big cups of tea as she shared two pieces of rye bread with Zhou Mingrui over tea.

There is no sawdust or excessive gluten mixed in, but it is unappetizing... Zhou Mingrui still felt weak and was starving. He forced himself to swallow the bread with the tea while complaining inwardly.

Melissa finished eating a few minutes later. After she adjusted her black hair that reached down to her vest, she looked at Zhou Mingrui and said, "Remember to buy fresh bread. All we need is eight pounds.

The weather is hot, so the bread will easily spoil. Also, buy the mutton and peas. Remember to buy them!"

Indeed, she was showing concern for her dull brother. She even had to repeat to emphasize it another time... Zhou Mingrui nodded with a smile.

"Alright."

Regarding the Loen Kingdom's pound, Zhou Mingrui matched Klein's muscle memory with his. He believed it was close to half a kilogram of what he was accustomed to.

Melissa did not say anything further. She stood up and tidied the area. After packing away the last bit of bread for lunch, she put on a tattered veil cap that their mother left behind, picked up a self-sewn bag used to carry her books and stationery, and prepared to leave.

It was not Sunday, so she had an entire day of classes to attend.

Walking from their apartment to Tingen Technical School took about fifty minutes. There were public horse carriages that cost a penny a kilometer with a limit of four pence in the city and six pence in the city outskirts. In order to save money, Melissa would leave ahead of time and walk to school.

Moments after she opened the main door, she paused in her footsteps and turned her body halfway, saying, "Klein, don't buy too much mutton or peas. Benson might come back on Sunday. Oh, and remember we only need eight pounds of bread."

"Alright. Sure thing," answered Zhou Mingrui exasperatedly.

Simultaneously, he repeated the word 'Sunday' a few times in his head.

In the Northern Continent, a year was similarly split into twelve months. Every year, there were 365 or 366 days. A week was similarly split into seven days.

The splitting of months was a result of astronomical observations. It made Zhou Mingrui suspect whether he was in a parallel world. As for the splitting of days, it was a result of religion. This was because the Northern Continent had seven orthodox gods—the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Lord of Storms, the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, the Evernight Goddess, Earth Mother, the God of Combat, and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Watching his sister close the door and leave, Zhou Mingrui suddenly sighed. Soon, his thoughts focused on the luck enhancement ritual.

Sorry, I really wish to return home...

Returning to his chair, he heard the faraway cathedral's bells chime again. It continued seven times before Zhou Mingrui slowly stood up. He went up front to the cupboard and took out his clothes.

A black vest with a matching suit, trousers that clung tightly to his legs, a halved top hat and his faint scholarly air made Zhou Mingrui feel like he was watching an English drama set in the Victorian era.

He suddenly muttered softly as he shook his head with a wry smile, "I'm not going for an interview. All I'm doing is buying some ingredients to prepare for my luck enhancement ritual..."

Klein was so concerned about his impending interview that it became instinct. When he was not focused enough, he habitually wore his only decent set of clothing.

After taking a breath, Zhou Mingrui took off his suit and vest, switching to a brownish-yellow coat. He also changed to a felt hat with a rounded edge of the same color.

With his outfit done, he walked to the side of the bed and lifted a square cushion. He reached his hand into an inconspicuous hole beneath and rummaged around before finding an intermediate layer.

When he retracted his right hand, there was a roll of notes in his palm. There were about eight notes with faded dark green colors.

These were all the savings Benson had at the moment. It even included the living expenses for the next three days. Two of them were five-soli notes and the remaining were one-soli notes.

In the Loen Kingdom's currency system, soli was ranked second. It originated from ancient silver coins. One soli was equivalent to twelve copper pence. They had denominations of one and five soli.

At the top of the currency system was the gold pound. They were also paper based but were guaranteed by gold and pegged directly. A gold pound was equivalent to twenty soli. They had denominations of one, five, and ten gold pounds.

Zhou Mingrui spread a note and caught a whiff of the faint unique ink.

This was the smell of money.

Perhaps a result of Klein's memory fragments or his constant desire for money, Zhou Mingrui felt like he had instantly fallen in love with these notes.

Look, their designs are so beautiful. It makes the stern and oldfashioned George III and his two mustaches appear especially adorable...

Look, the watermark that can be seen when the note is placed against sunlight is so alluring. The exquisite design for the anticounterfeit label makes it completely different from those fake fancy schlocks!

Zhou Mingrui admired it for nearly a minute before pulling out two one-soli notes. He then rolled up the remaining notes and stuffed them back into the cushion's concealed layer.

After arranging and flattening the cloth around the hole, Zhou Mingrui folded the two notes he had taken out neatly and placed them into the left pocket of his brownish-yellow jacket. He separated the notes from the few pence he had in his trouser pocket.

With all of this done, he placed a key into his right pocket and brought a dark brownish paper bag along with him and quickly walked toward the door.

His shuffling footsteps slowed down from a brisk pace until it eventually stopped.

Zhou Mingrui stood by the door and was unsure when he had already begun to frown.

Klein's suicide was fraught with peculiarities. Would he encounter any 'accidents' if he were to leave just like that?

After some deep thought, Zhou Mingrui returned to his desk and pulled open the drawer. He then took out the shimmering brass revolver.

This was the only defensive weapon he could think of, and it was the only weapon with sufficient power!

Although he had never practiced shooting, just pulling such a revolver out would definitely daunt anyone!

He caressed the revolver's cold metal before stuffing his revolver into the pocket where his notes were. He clasped the money in his palm as his fingers pressed onto the gun's handle. It was perfectly concealed.

Feeling secure, he who knew a little of everything suddenly had a worry.

Would I end up misfiring?

Being deluged with such a thought, Zhou Mingrui quickly thought of a solution. He drew the revolver and released the cylinder. He then aligned the empty chamber which was a result of the 'suicide' along the gun's hammer before closing it.

This way, even if there was a misfire, he would discharge an 'empty round!'

After stuffing his revolver back into his pocket, Zhou Mingrui kept his left hand in there.

He pressed down on his hat with his right hand and pulled open the door before leaving.

The corridor during the day remained dim as limited sunlight shone in from the window situated at the end of the corridor. Zhou Mingrui quickly went down the stairs and left the apartment before taking in the brilliance and warmth of the sun.

Although it was almost July, it was still considered the middle of summer. However, Tingen was situated north of the Loen Kingdom, so it had unique climate characteristics. The highest annual temperature was not even 30°C on Earth, with even cooler mornings. However, the streets were awash with filthy water and strewn junk. From Klein's memories, this was not a rare sight in low-income communities, even if there were sewers. After all, there were just too many people and people needed to survive.

"Come and try our delicious roasted fish!"

"Hot and fresh oyster soup. Drink a bowl in the morning and feel invigorated all day!"

"Fresh fish from the port for just five pence apiece!"

"Muffins and eel soup make the perfect combination!"

"Conch! Conch! Conch!"

"Vegetables freshly plucked from the farms outside the city. Cheap and fresh!"

...

The mobile hawkers who sold vegetables, fruits, and hot food shouted along the streets as they beckoned the rushing pedestrians. Some of them would stop and carefully compare before purchasing. Others would impatiently wave their hands as they had yet to find work for the day.

Zhou Mingrui took in a whiff of the air that mixed both noxious and fragrant aromas. As he clenched the revolver tightly in his left hand, he held the notes tight. He pressed down on his hat with his right hand while passing through the busy street, slouching a little.

There was bound to be thieves in populated areas. Furthermore, this street had no lack of poor citizens who were working part time after losing their previous jobs. There were also starving children that were exploited by adults to do their bidding.

He proceeded forward until he reached a point where the crowdedness around him restored to normal. He straightened his back and raised his head to look down the street.

There was a vagrant accordionist busking. The melody was sometimes pleasant, sometimes fervent.

Beside him were several children in ragged clothes with sallow complexions due to malnutrition.

They listened to the music and moved to the beat, dancing selfmade choreographies. Their faces were filled with joy as though they were a prince or an angel.

A deadpan woman passed by; her skirt was dirty and her skin was dull.

Her gaze appeared dull and sluggish. Only when she looked at the bunch of children did a faint glow flash. It was as though she had seen herself from three decades ago.

Zhou Mingrui overtook her and turned into another street before stopping at Smyrin Bakery.

The owner of the bakery was a seventy-plus year old granny named Wendy Smyrin. Her hair was completely grayish-white and she always wore a genial smile. From the beginning of Klein's memories, she had been here selling bread and pastries.

Oh, the Tingen biscuits and lemon cakes she bakes are very delicious...

Zhou Mingrui gulped a mouthful of saliva and smiled.

"Mrs. Smyrin, eight pounds of rye bread."

"Oh. Dear Klein, where's Benson? Is he not back?" Wendy asked smilingly.

"In a few more days," answered Zhou Mingrui vaguely.

As Wendy took the rye bread, she sighed. "He sure is a hardworking lad. He will have a good wife."

Upon saying this, the corners of her lips curled up as she said playfully, "All is good now. You have already graduated. You are a history graduate of our Khoy University~ Oh, you will soon be able to earn money. You should not be staying in the apartment you are currently living in. At the very least, you should have a bathroom you can call your own."

"Mrs. Smyrin, you seem to be a young and energetic woman today." All Zhou Mingrui could do was respond with a dry smile.

If Klein were to successfully pass his interview and become a lecturer at Tingen University, it was true that his family would immediately be pushed up to a higher socioeconomic status!

In his memory fragments, he had once fantasized about renting a bungalow in the suburbs. There would be five or six rooms, two bathrooms, a huge balcony upstairs, two rooms, a dining room, a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and an underground storage room on the first floor.

This was not a wishful dream. Even a lecturer on probation at Tingen University would have a weekly salary of two gold pounds. After the probationary period, the salary would be raised to three gold pounds and ten soli. One had to know that despite working for so many years, Klein's brother, Benson, only had a weekly salary of one pound and ten soli. Ordinary workers at a factory did not even get a pound or, at best, a little more. And rent for a bungalow was about nineteen soli to one pound and eighteen soli.

"This is the difference between earning three to four thousand yuan and earning fourteen to fifteen thousand yuan a month..." Zhou Mingrui mumbled to himself.

However, all of this was under the premise that he passed either the Tingen University or Backlund University interviews.

There were not many other opportunities. People without any connections were unable to get recommendations to become a public servant. And those who studied history were more limited in job

opportunities. There was not much demand for private consultants from the aristocrats, banks, or industrial magnates.

Taking into account that the knowledge Klein grasped was fragmented and incomplete, Zhou Mingrui felt awkward and guilty towards Mrs. Smyrin's expectations of him.

"No, I have always been this young," answered Wendy humorously.

As she spoke, she packed the sixteen rye bread she had weighed into the brown paper bag that Zhou Mingrui had brought. She stretched out her right hand and said, "Nine pence."

Every rye bread weighed about half a pound as differences were inevitable.

"Nine pence? Wasn't it eleven pence two days ago?" Zhou Mingrui asked subconsciously.

It cost 15 pence the month before the previous month.

"You have to thank the people who protested on the streets for the repeal of the Grain Act," said Wendy as she shrugged.

Zhou Mingrui nodded in vague acknowledgment. Klein's memories regarding this were incomplete. All he remembered was that the core tenet of the Grain Act was to protect the prices of domestic agriculture products. Once the prices rose to a certain level, grain imports from Southern nations like Feynapotter, Masin, Lenburg were stopped.

Why would people protest the act?

Without saying much, Zhou Mingrui, afraid he would end up pulling out the revolver, carefully took out his notes and handed one of them over to Mrs. Smyrin.

He was given three copper pence in change. Stuffing them into his trouser pocket, he took the paper bag containing the bread and headed for the 'Lettuce and Meat' market across the street. He was working hard for the mutton stewed with peas his sister had exhorted.

There was a municipal square at the intersection of Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street. Many tents were erected there, and clowns dressed in odd and funny attires were distributing fliers.

"There's a circus performance tomorrow night?" Zhou Mingrui glanced at the fliers in the hands of others as he read their contents under his breath.

Melissa would definitely like it. However, how much is the entrance fee?

With that thought, Zhou Mingrui went closer.

Just as he was about to ask a clown with a red and yellow painted face, a hoarse woman's voice sounded from beside him.

"Would you like to try a divination?"

Zhou Mingrui subconsciously turned his head and saw a woman wearing a pointed hat and a long black dress standing in front of a short tent.

Her face was smeared with red and yellow paint and her eyes were a profound grayish-blue.

"No," Zhou Mingrui shook his head in response. He did not have the spare cash for divination.

The woman laughed and said, "My tarot divination is very accurate."

"Tarot..." Zhou Mingrui was instantly dumbfounded.

This pronunciation was almost identical to the tarot cards on Earth!

And tarot cards from Earth were a set of cards used for divination. They just had graphics that represented different omens.

Wait... He suddenly recalled the origins of tarot divination in this world.

It did not originate from the seven orthodox gods nor was it an ancient legacy. Instead, it was created by the Intis Republic's Consul of that era, Roselle Gustav, more than 170 years ago.

This Mr. Roselle invented the steam engine, improved the sailing boat, overthrew the Intis Kingdom's imperial rule, and was recognized by the God of Craftsmanship. He also became the first Consul of the Intis Republic.

Later, he invaded other nations and placed Lenburg and other nations under his protection. He made the Loen Kingdom, Feynapotter, Feysac Empire and other powerful Northern Continent nations bow down to the Intis Republic. Following that, the Republic was then changed to an Empire and he became the self-proclaimed 'Emperor Caesar.'

It was during Roselle's rule that the Church of Craftsmanship received its first public holy revelation since the Fifth Epoch. Ever since, the God of Craftsmanship was changed to the God of Steam and Machinery.

Roselle also invented tarot divination. He also established the contemporary system of paper-based cards and their playstyles. There were many familiar styles that Zhou Mingrui was familiar with, such as Upgrade, Fighting the Landlord, Texas Poker, and Quint...

In addition, the marine fleets he sent out discovered a sea route that led to the Southern Continent through the stormy and turbulent seas. This also began the era of colonialism.

Unfortunately, he was betrayed in his old age. In the year 1198 of the Fifth Epoch, he was assassinated by the combined forces of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, the former Intis royal family—the Sauron family—and other aristocrats. He eventually died in the White Maple Palace.

This... To recall such general knowledge suddenly made him facepalm.

Could this be a transmigration senior?

With this in mind, Zhou Mingrui was intrigued to see what tarot cards looked like. Therefore, he nodded at the pointy hat woman with the painted face and said, "If the... well... price is

reasonable, I'll give it a try."

The woman immediately said with a laugh, "Sir, you are the first one here today, so it's on the house."

Free? Free things cost the most!

Zhou Mingrui silently mumbled and decided that he would not purchase any additional services whatsoever. He would firmly refuse them all.

If you are really that capable, try divining that I transmigrated here!

With this in mind, Zhou Mingrui followed behind the woman whose face was painted red and yellow, stooping low to enter the low tent.

The tent's interior was extremely dark, illuminated only by several beams of light that managed to seep inside. A table covered with paper cards could be made out faintly in the low illumination.

The woman with the sharp pointy hat was not affected by this at all. Her long black dress glided as though it was moving over water while she went around to the table. She sat on the opposite side and lit a candle.

The dim yellow light flickered, causing the inside of the tent to appear bright and dark at the same time. It instantly added a much more mysterious feel to the atmosphere.

Zhou Mingrui sat down quietly, his gaze sweeping over the tarot cards on the table where he discovered familiar cards like "The

Magician," "The Emperor," "The Hanged Man," and "Temperance," etc.

Could Roselle have been a 'senior'... I wonder if he was also a fellow countryman of mine... Zhou Mingrui mumbled to himself subconsciously.

Before he could finish looking at the opened cards on the table, the woman who claimed to have accurate divinations had already reached out her hands to gather all of the cards together. She stacked them into a deck and pushed it in front of him.

"Shuffle the cards first and cut the deck," the circus fortuneteller said in a muted voice.

"Me? Shuffle?" Zhou Mingrui asked reflexively.

The yellow and red paint on the fortune-teller's face squirmed together as she revealed a slight smile, saying, "Of course, everyone's destiny can only be unraveled by themselves. I only serve as a reader of it."

Zhou Mingrui immediately questioned her warily, "This reading does not require additional fees, right?"

As a keyboard folklorist, I've already seen too many of such tricks!

The fortune-teller was visibly taken aback before finally saying muffledly, "It's free."

Zhou Mingrui, relieved, stuffed the revolver further back into his pocket. Thereafter, he calmly reached out his two hands to shuffle and cut the deck skillfully.

"It's done." He placed the already shuffled tarot cards in the middle of the table.

The fortune-teller clasped the cards with both her hands and carefully looked at cards for a while. Then, she suddenly opened her mouth and said, "I'm sorry, I forgot to ask, but what would you like to ask about?"

Back when he was wooing his first love, Zhou Mingrui had also done research on tarot cards. He asked unhesitatingly, "Past, present, and future."

This was a type of divination as part of tarot card interpretation —three cards when opened sequentially symbolized one's past, present, and future.

The fortune-teller nodded first, then curled her lips to reveal a smile and said, “Then please reshuffle the deck. You can only truly get the cards you want if you know what you would like to ask about.”

Were you fooling me just now? Do you have to be this petty?

Didn’t I only ask a few times if this would be a free service? Zhou Mingrui’s cheeks twitched a little. He took a deep breath and took the tarot deck back to reshuffle and cut it.

“There won’t be any problems this time, right?” He placed the already cut deck back onto the table.

“No problem.” The fortune-teller reached out her fingers and picked a card from the top of the deck. Then she placed it on the left side of Zhou Mingrui. Her voice was going lower and lower as she spoke, “This card symbolizes your past.”

“This card symbolizes your present.” The fortune-teller placed the second card right in front of Zhou Mingrui.

Then, she picked the third card and put it on the right side of Zhou Mingrui.

“This card symbolizes the future.”

“Alright, which card would you like to see first?” The fortuneteller raised her head up after completing her placement of the cards and gazed deeply at Zhou Mingrui with her grayish-blue eyes.

“I’ll have a look at the ‘present’ first,” Zhou Mingrui said after giving it some thought.

The fortune-teller nodded slowly and flipped over the tarot card that was directly in front of Zhou Mingrui.

A colorfully dressed character was depicted on this card, wearing splendid headgear with a stick over his shoulder. There was a bindle hanging on the end of the stick and a puppy was following behind him. It was numbered “0.”

“The Fool,” the fortune-teller lightly read out the name of the card with her grayish-blue eyes affixed on Zhou Mingrui.

The Fool? The “0” card of tarot? A start? A fresh beginning with all kinds of possibilities? Zhou Mingrui was not even considered an amateur enthusiast of tarot, so he could only make a rough interpretation based on his own impressions of tarot.

Just as the fortune-teller was about to say something, the cloth curtains of the tent were suddenly lifted open. The ray of sunlight that shone in was so blinding that it caused the backfacing Zhou Mingrui to instinctively narrow his eyes.

“Why are you impersonating me again! It’s my job to handle the divination for people!” a woman’s voice growled angrily. “Return to your post quickly! You must remember that you’re just an animal trainer!”

An animal trainer? Zhou Mingrui’s eyes had already adapted to the light by now. He saw a similar-looking woman who was also wearing a sharp pointy hat in a black dress, with her face painted in red and yellow as well. The only difference was that she was taller and had a slimmer physique.

The woman who was seated in front of him immediately stood up and said disgruntledly, “Don’t mind this, it’s just that I like doing this. But I have to say, my divination and interpretation can be really accurate sometimes. I’m serious...”

She spoke and lifted up her dress to go around from the side of the table before quickly trotting away from the tent.

“Sir, would you like me to interpret your cards for you?” the real fortune-teller looked at Zhou Mingrui and asked with a smile. Zhou Mingrui’s lips twitched and asked her sincerely, “Is it free?” “...No,” the real fortune-teller answered.

“Then forget it.” Zhou Mingrui pulled his hands back and put them into his pockets. He clutched his revolver and money before stooping again to exit the tent.

Damn! He actually got an animal trainer to be his fortune-teller?

Was an animal trainer who didn’t want to be a fortune-teller not a good clown?

Zhou Mingrui very quickly put this matter behind him. He spent seven pence at the ‘Lettuce and Meat’ market for a pound of notso-great mutton. Then, he also bought some tender broad beans, cabbage, onions, potatoes, and other items. Together with the bread that he bought earlier, he spent a total of 25 copper pennies, which converted to two soli and one pence.

“There is really not enough to go around for spending. Poor Benson...” Not only had Zhou Mingrui spent the two notes that he had brought with him, but it was also necessary for him to top it up with the one penny he had in his pocket.

He just sighed and did not think further about it as he hurried back home.

With the staple food, he could now carry out the luck enhancement ritual!

...

After the second-floor tenants gradually left, Zhou Mingrui was still in no hurry to carry out the ritual. Instead, he translated the “The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings” and related phrases into the ancient Feysac language, as well as the Loen language. He was intending to try the ritual again the next day in those local languages if the original incantation did not take effect!

After all, he had to take into consideration the differences between the two worlds. In Rome, do as the Romans do!

As for translating it into an ancient ritual prayer that used the dedicated Hermes language, Zhou Mingrui had a difficult time completing it due to his lack of vocabulary.

After readying everything, he finally took out the four loaves of rye bread. He placed one in the corner where the coal stove was originally, one at the bottom inner side of the dress mirror, one at the top of the cupboard where two walls met, and one at the right side of the study table where miscellaneous items were kept.

With a deep breath, Zhou Mingrui came to the center of the room and spent a few minutes to calm himself. Then, he took a solemn step forward and went in a counter-clockwise direction in the shape of a square.

When he took the first step, he chanted in a low whisper, “The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.”

The second step, he sincerely chanted, “The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.”

The third step, Zhou Mingrui breathed out a whisper. “The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.”

At the fourth step, he spat out a foul breath and meditated in concentration. “The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.”

When he returned back to the original spot, Zhou Mingrui closed his eyes and waited in his place for an outcome. He had some anticipation in him, some unease, some hope, and some fear.

Could he make it back?

Was there going to be any effect?

Could there be some unexpected situation?

The darkness in front of him was tainted with the crimson light of hope. Zhou Mingrui's thoughts were swirling in his head and he was finding it difficult to quell it.

It was at this time that he suddenly felt the surrounding air seem to stop, becoming thick and mysterious.

Immediately after, a low whisper could be heard beside his ears that sounded at times real, at times sharp, at times imaginary, at times alluring, at times maniacal, and at times crazy.

He clearly did not understand the murmuring that went on, but Zhou Mingrui still couldn't help himself from wanting to listen to it and distinguish what it was saying.

His head was in pain again. It was so painful that it felt like someone had stuck a steel drill rod into it.

Zhou Mingrui only felt like his head was going to explode. His thoughts were filled with psychedelic colors.

He knew that something was wrong and tried to open his eyes. However, he wasn't even able to complete such a simple action.

His entire body was getting tighter and tighter and it felt like he could just break apart at any time. At this time, a self-mocking thought came up in Zhou Mingrui's mind:

If you wouldn't die if you didn't court death...

He could no longer bear it. Just as his mind was going to break, the murmuring of voices faded away and his surroundings became very quiet. The mood was an erratic one.

It was not only the mood; Zhou Mingrui felt his own body going through the same sensations as well.

He tried once more to open his eyes, an extremely easy task this time.

A gray fog appeared over his eyes—haziness, vague, and endless.

"What's with this situation?" Zhou Mingrui suddenly looked around him and then lowered his head down to discover that he was floating at the edge of an endless fog.

The fog was flowing like water and was dotted with a lot of crimson 'stars.' Some of them were enormous while others were tiny. There was a sense of them being hidden in the deep depths, while others floated over the surface of this water-like fog.

Looking at the seemingly holographic sight, Zhou Mingrui reached out his right hand in a half-confused, half-exploring manner to try to touch the crimson 'star' that was seemingly floating on the surface. He was trying to find a way to leave this place.

When his hand touched the surface of that star, a water mark suddenly appeared from within his body and agitated the stars into a "crimson" burst. It looked like a dreamlike burning of flames.

Zhou Mingrui got a fright from it. He retracted his right hand in a panic, but accidentally touched yet another crimson star.

As a result, this star burst with splendid light as well.

In turn, Zhou Mingrui felt his mind empty and his spirit dissipated.

...

In the Loen Kingdom's capital, Backlund. Inside a luxurious looking villa at the royal district.

Audrey Hall sat in front of a dresser. The markings on it were antiquated and there was a cracked bronze mirror on the surface.

"Mirror, mirror, awaken...

"In the name of the Hall family, I command you to awaken!"

...

She switched between many different sayings, but there was no reaction from the mirror at all.

After more than 10 minutes, she finally chose to give up and pouted her lips in grievance. She said in a soft murmur, "Father was indeed lying to me. He always tells me that this mirror was the treasure of the Solomon Empire's Black Emperor, and that it is an extraordinary item..."

Her voice trailed off. The bronze mirror which rested on the dresser suddenly glowed with a crimson light that shrouded her completely.

...

In the Sonia Sea, a three-masted sailboat that looked like an obvious relic was navigating through a storm.

Alger Wilson stood on deck, his body undulating with the currents at sea, maintaining his balance easily.

He wore a robe embroidered with lightning patterns, and in his hand was a quirky-shaped glass bottle. Bubbles billowed inside the bottle at times, frost turned into snow at times, and signs of gusting wind could be seen at times.

"Still short on the Ghost Shark's blood..." Alger murmured.

Then at this moment, a crimson burst appeared in the space between the glass bottle and the surface of his palm. In an instant, it enveloped the surroundings as well.

...

In the fog of gray mist, Audrey Hall regained her sight. She started reckoning the situation in a state of horror and confusion when she noticed the blurry image of a man on the opposite side of her doing the same as well.

Immediately after, the both of them discovered another mystery person standing not far from them who was shrouded in a gray mist.

The 'mysterious person' was none other than Zhou Mingrui. He was similarly dumbfounded.

"Sir, where is this?"

Audrey and Alger were startled at first, falling silent in the process. Then, they immediately started speaking in unison.

"What are you planning on doing?"

Not only did they speak the same Loen language, they also shared the same grim and tense vibes.

Where am I? What do I plan to do here? I would like to know too... Calming himself down, Zhou Mingrui silently repeated the questions posed by the two.

What left the deepest impression on him were neither the sentences formed by words nor the meanings behind them, but the display of bewilderment, vigilance, panic, and reverence by the couple!

For some baffling reason, two people had been mysteriously dragged into this world surrounded by gray fog. As the perpetrator, Zhou Mingrui was already feeling abnormally dumbfounded and startled, let alone the couple who was pulled into this mess completely passively!

For them, such events and encounters might already be beyond their imaginations, right?

Momentarily, Zhou Mingrui thought of two options: The first option was feigning victimhood to hide his true identity, and in turn gain a considerable amount of trust. He could then take a wait-and-see approach and take advantage of his circumstances where necessary. The other option was to maintain his mysterious identity in the eyes of the couple. He could then affect the subsequent development while gleaning valuable information from them.

Without the luxury of time to deliberate over the situation, he grasped hold of the thought that flashed across his mind. He made an immediate decision to try out the second idea.

Exploit the psychological state of the others to gain the greatest advantage for himself!

After a few seconds of silence in the fog, Zhou Mingrui chuckled. With a low but not heavy tone, he calmly spoke as though he was replying to the polite greetings from the visitors, “An attempt.”

An attempt... an attempt? Audrey Hall looked at the mysterious guy veiled in the grayish-white fog, and the only thought was that whatever was happening was absurd, funny, horrifying, and weird.

She was at the dressing table inside her bedroom only moments ago. But just by turning around, she had “come” to this place that was filled with gray fog!

How inconceivable!

Audrey took a breath, revealing an impeccable, courteous smile. She asked in a somewhat perturbed way, “Sir, is the attempt over? Might you permit our return?”

Alger Wilson also had the intentions to probe Zhou Mingrui in a similar fashion, but his rich experience made him statelier. He held back his impulse and only took on the role of a silent onlooker.

Zhou Mingrui looked at the questioner. Looking through the hazy mist, he could roughly see the silhouette of the person in question. It was a tall girl with smooth blond hair, but her exact countenance could not be seen clearly.

He did not rush to reply to the girl’s question but turned around to look at the man. He had messy dark-blue hair, as well as a medium stature that was not considered stout.

Zhou Mingrui suddenly realized something. Once he became stronger or had a deeper understanding of the foggy world, perhaps it was possible for him to see through the fog and discern the girl and the man.

In this situation, they are the visitors, and I’m the master!

After changing his mindset, Zhou Mingrui instantly noticed details that he had neglected earlier on.

The girl with a melodious voice and the mature, withdrawn man both looked considerably incorporeal. Tainted by a faint crimson red, they resembled a projected image of the two crimson red “stars” beyond the gray fog.

This projection was based on the connection between the crimson red and himself, an intangible connection that only he himself could realistically grasp hold of.

The projection would disappear once the connection is cut, and the couple would then return... Zhou Mingrui nodded mildly and looked at the blond, chuckling. “Of course, if you make a formal request, you can return this very moment.”

When she did not identify any ill intention from his tone, Audrey heaved a sigh of relief. She believed that since a gentleman who was capable of such miraculous things had given his word, he would definitely abide by it stringently.

With her mind somewhat mollified, she surprisingly was in no hurry to request her leave. She rolled her virid eyes left and right, which sparkled with an abnormal radiance.

She said in an anxious, anticipative and tempted manner, “This is such a wonderful experience... Yes, I have always been hoping that something like this would happen. I mean—I like mysteries and supernatural miracles. No, my point is—what I mean is that, Sir, what can I do to become a Beyonder?”

She got more excited as she spoke, so much so that she was fumbling over her words. The dream that sprouted in her as a result of listening to thrilling fantasies as told by her elders finally saw the possibility of being materialized.

However, with just a few words, she had already forgotten all her previous fears and horrors.

Good question! I would also like to know the answer... Zhou Mingrui complained inwardly.

He started to ponder on an answer to the question to maintain his unfathomable image.

At the same time, he felt that it was quite unbecoming of him to talk while standing. Shouldn’t he be in a palace, sitting at the head of a long table, and on a mysterious high-back chair engraved with ancient patterns, while silently observing his visitors?

As soon as this thought surfaced, the gray fog started to churn, giving both Audrey and Alger a shock.

In an instant, they saw a number of towering stone pillars around them. Above them was a vast dome that encapsulated them.

This entire edifice looked magnificent, grand and lofty, just like a legendary palace for giants.

Directly under the dome where the gray fog gathered, a long, bronze table appeared with ten high-back chairs on either side in a symmetrical arrangement, along with a chair on each of the two ends of the long table The back of each chair dazzled and shone faintly with crimson red, drawing the outlines of weird constellations that differed from reality.

Audrey and Alger sat face-to-face, sitting next to the Seat of Honor.

The girl looked to her sides, and could not help but mumble, “How fascinating...”

It is certainly fascinating... Zhou Mingrui extended his right hand and caressed the edge of the bronze table a little while maintaining an unperturbed expression.

Alger inspected the surroundings, and after a few seconds of silence, he suddenly opened his mouth, and answered Audrey’s question in place of Zhou Mingrui.

“Are you from Loen?

“If you want to become a Beyonder, join the Churches of either the Evernight Goddess, the Lord of Storms, or the God of Steam and Machinery.

“The majority of us will not meet a Beyonder our entire lives. This has caused Churches, and even some clergymen within some of the biggest Churches, to suspect the same. While this is the case, I am certain to tell you that Beyonders still exist in courts, tribunals, and execution agencies. They are still

fighting against the dangers that grow in the dark, only that their numbers are much fewer as compared to before and during the early days of the Iron Age."

Zhou Mingrui listened attentively, but he tried his best to present himself as paying little attention to Alger's words, much like how he was listening to kids telling stories.

Relying on Klein's fragmented general knowledge of history, Zhou Mingrui knew clearly that the "Iron Age" referred to the current epoch, which was the Fifth Epoch that began 1349 years ago.

Audrey silently listened to Alger finish his sentence before sighing.

"Mister, I know all about what you just said; I even know more than that, including the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind, but I don't want to lose my freedom."

Alger gave a low-sounding laugh, and said vaguely, "You can't become a Beyonder without sacrifices. If you don't consider joining Churches and accepting their given challenges, you can only seek the royal families and the few nobles with family histories of more than a thousand years. If not, you can rely on your luck to search for clandestine evil organizations."

Audrey puffed her cheeks subconsciously and looked around in a fluster. After confirming that both the "mysterious man" and Alger did not notice her tic, she pressed, "Are there no other solutions?"

Alger sank into silence. About half a minute later, he turned around to look at the "mysterious man" who was watching the two of them in silence.

Realizing that Zhou Mingrui had no plans to make any comment, he looked back at Audrey and said with deliberation, "I have two sets of Sequence 9 potion formulas." *Sequence 9?* Zhou Mingrui muttered to himself.

"Really? Which two sets?" Audrey clearly knew what the Sequence 9 potion formulas meant.

Alger leaned back slightly, and replied unhurriedly, "As you know, humanity can only depend on potions to become real Beyonders, while the names of potions come from the 'Blasphemy Slate.' After constant translations into Jotun [1], Elvish, ancient and modern Hermes, and ancient Feysac, they have undergone changes to match the day and age of that era. The essence is not in their names, but whether they portray the 'core characteristics' of the potions.

"I have a Sequence 9 Potion named 'Sailor.' It enables you to have excellent balancing capabilities. Even if you were on a boat in a rainstorm, you will be able to walk about freely as though you were on land. You will also gain immense strength and illusory scales under your skin. They will enable you to swim like a fish and be difficult to catch. You will move agilely underwater just like marine animals. Even without any equipment, you will be able to easily submerge underwater for at least ten minutes." "Sounds great... the 'Keepers of the Seas' from the Lord of Storms?"

"It was called by that name in the past." Alger did not pause and continued. "The second Sequence 9 potion is called 'Spectator.' Although I am not sure what it was called in the past. This set of potions enables you to have an exceptionally sharp mind with acute observational abilities. I believe you can understand what 'spectator' means from watching operas and plays. Just like an audience, spectators judge the 'actors' in the secular world, catching a glimpse of the real thoughts of them through their emotions, conduct, and mantras."

At this point, Alger emphasized, "You must remember, regardless of whether you are at an extravagant banquet or a crowded street, spectators can only be spectators forever."

Audrey's eyes shone as she listened, and spoke after a long while, "Why? Alright, this is a follow-up question. I-I think I have fallen in love with this feeling—of being a 'Spectator.' How can I get this potion's formula? What can I use to trade with you for it?"

Alger looked like he was already prepared as he said in a deep voice, “The blood of Ghost Sharks, at least 100 milliliters of it.”

Audrey nodded her head excitedly, but subsequently asked worriedly, “If I can get it—and I’m saying if—how do I hand it to you? How can you promise me that you can give the potion’s formula to me in return for the Ghost Shark’s blood, as well as the authenticity of the formula?”

Alger said calmly, “I’ll give you an address. I’ll mail the formula to you, or tell you directly here, once I receive the blood of the Ghost Shark.”

“As for promises, I think that both you and I can feel assured under the witness of the mysterious sir.”

As he said this, he swept his eyes towards Zhou Mingrui who was sitting up straight at the Seat of Honor.

“Sir, the fact that you brought us here shows that you have tremendous strength unimaginable to us. Neither one of us would dare violate a promise with you as a witness.”

“That’s right!” Audrey’s eyes sparkled and agreed with excitement.

From her perspective, the mysterious gentleman who had unimaginable abilities was definitely an “authoritative” witness.

How could I or the guy opposite me dare trick him!

Audrey half-turned her body and looked at Zhou Mingrui earnestly.

“Sir, please be the witness of our trade.”

At that moment, she then realized that she was all too impolite, having forgotten all along to ask a particular question. She asked hurriedly, “Sir, how should we address you?”

Alger nodded slightly, and echoed the same question in a serious manner, “Sir, how should we address you?”

Zhou Mingrui was taken aback. He gently rapped his fingers on the bronze table. The contents of the earlier divination flashed across his mind suddenly.

He leaned back, withdrew his right hand, and crossed his ten fingers, placing them below his chin. He gave the duo a faint smile.

“You can address me as...”

Upon saying this, he paused for a moment. He said amiably and calmly, “The Fool.”

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1. Language of Giants.

"You can address me as The Fool."

The simple answer soon emanated through the grand hall and dissipated into the fog. However, the voice kept resonating in Audrey's and Alger's hearts, stirring up one ripple after another.

They never expected such a designation, but they felt that he was deserving of it. The designation perfectly embodied his image as someone mysterious, powerful, and bizarre!

After a few seconds of silence, Audrey stood up, held up her skirt slightly and bent her knees, curtseying to Zhou Mingrui.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, would you please permit me to take the liberty of requesting you to be the witness of our trade?"

"It's nothing." Zhou Mingrui's mind whirred as he answered in a way that matched his status.

"It's our honor, Mr. Fool." Alger stood up as well. He bent his back slightly with his right palm over his chest.

Zhou Mingrui lowered his right palm and smiled.

"Continue, the both of you."

Alger nodded and sat back down before looking at Audrey.

"If you can obtain the Ghost Shark's blood, get someone to send it to the Warrior & Sea Bar at Pelican Street, in the White Rose Borough of Pritz Harbor. Tell the boss, Williams, that it's what the 'Captain' wants.

"Once I acknowledge receipt, will you be giving me an address to mail the potion formula to or do you want me to tell it to you here directly?"

Audrey thought for a moment before saying with a smile, "I will choose the more secure method. Let's do it here, although it's a test of my memory."

Since Mr. Fool had agreed to bear witness for the trade, it also represented that there would be a similar 'gathering' the next time.

With this in mind, she suddenly turned her head as she looked at Zhou Mingrui with sparkling eyes. With a tone of interest, she suggested, "Mr. Fool, would you mind making a few more

'attempts' like this?"

Alger listened to her suggestion calmly; he was tempted by the suggestion as well. He hurriedly echoed, "Mr. Fool, don't you find such 'gatherings' interesting? Although your powers exceed our imaginations, there has to be certain domains that you don't understand or excel in. The person across me is obviously a young lady of lofty stature. I also have my unique set of experiences, insights, mediums, and resources. Perhaps there will come a day when both of us can help you complete something trivial that might be inconvenient for you."

From his point of view, the fact that he had been pulled into this space without any warning or any means to resist meant that the mysterious Mr. Fool was in control. Participating in the 'gatherings' was not necessarily something he could refuse.

Therefore, it was better to reap the benefits of this encounter as much as he could to make up for his passive and disadvantaged state.

The trio at the long table had different backgrounds, resources, information channels, and comprehension of the mystical domain. If they interacted and enjoyed some limited cooperation, they could produce unpredictable and immeasurable effects!

The resource trade that had just been negotiated was one example. Another example would be if he wished to kill someone. He could easily request the gathering's members who did not appear to be related to him both on the surface and in reality for help. He could perfectly misdirect any investigators.

A young lady of lofty stature... Was my behavior and accent that obvious? Audrey stared blankly, mouth slightly agape, but she soon jolted back to her senses and nodded her head without any hesitation.

"Mr. Fool, I think it's a very good suggestion. As long as this gathering becomes regular, you can totally leave certain things that are inconvenient for you to us. Of course, it has to be something within our capacities."

From the moment he heard the suggestion, Zhou Mingrui was already weighing the pros and cons. More gatherings definitely allowed him to gain more knowledge of the secrets of the Beyonders or other mysteries, a boon for his transmigration back. For example, it was likely that the potion formula would appear at the next gathering because of the 'spectators.' Similarly, the information he gained was bound to be helpful for his present life.

However, more gatherings meant it was easier to expose himself!

Indeed, regardless of the world, there is no such thing as a free lunch... Zhou Mingrui extended his right hand again as he rapped the side of the long table with his finger gently.

Considering the fact that he was in control of the gathering's summoning and dismissal, any threat of exposure was within the confines of his control. The pros clearly exceeded the cons, so Zhou Mingrui rapidly made a decision.

He stopped his rapping as he smiled at the anticipative and perturbed gazes of the duo.

"I'm a person who likes a fair and equal exchange.

"Your help will not go unrewarded.

"Every Monday at three in the afternoon, try your best to be alone. After I make a few more attempts and figure out certain things, perhaps you can apply for a leave of absence ahead of time. You will no longer need to worry about being in inappropriate situations."

This was a form of agreement to Alger's and Audrey's suggestions.

Audrey had just turned seventeen. Having been taken care of her entire life, she had the character of a young girl. Therefore, she could not help but clench her fist and gradually pump it in front of her chest when she heard The Fool's reply.

Without waiting for Alger to say a word, Audrey said in excitement, her eyes glowing, "Then, shall we give ourselves code names? After all, we can't use our real names for conversation."

Although I might not be able to deceive Mr. Fool regarding my true identity, the person opposite me poses some danger. I must not let him know who I am!

"Good idea," answered Zhou Mingrui in a simple and relaxed manner.

Audrey's mind immediately began whirring as she aired her thoughts as they came to her.

"You are Mr. Fool which is derived from tarot cards. Then, as a fixed, long-term, and secretive 'gathering,' we should be uniform in our designations. Yes, I'll also choose one from the tarot cards."

Her tone slowly turned joyous.

"I've decided. My designation shall be 'Justice!'"

It was one of the twenty-two Major Arcana tarot cards.

"What about you, Mister?" Audrey cheekily smiled at her

'partner' sitting across her.

Alger frowned slightly before relaxing it immediately.

“The Hanged Man.”

It was another Major Arcana card.

“Alright, then we can be considered as the founding members of the Tarot Club!” Audrey was the first to blurt it out happily, only to look fearfully at the fog-concealed Zhou Mingrui. “Will that be alright, Mr. Fool?”

Zhou Mingrui shook his head in amusement.

“You can decide on such trivial matters by yourselves.” “Thank you!” Audrey was clearly thrilled.

Following that, she looked at Alger.

“Mr. Hanged Man, can you repeat the address again once more? I’m afraid that my memories will fail me.”

“No problem.” Alger was very pleased with Audrey’s seriousness as he repeated the address once more.

After repeating it to herself silently thrice, Audrey said again in excitement, “I heard that tarot cards were invented by Emperor Roselle as a game. In fact, doesn’t it come equipped with the power to divine the future?”

“No. Most of the time, divination stems from one’s self. Everyone has something spiritual about themselves, allowing them to attune to the spiritual world and connect to information about themselves at an even higher level. However, ordinary folks are unable to notice this, much less be able to interpret the ‘signs’ they receive. This information will present itself with the help of divination tools. Let me raise a simple example, dreams and dream interpreters.” Alger took a glance at Zhou Mingrui and seeing no response from him, he refuted Audrey’s claim. “Tarot cards are, in fact, such a tool. It uses more symbolism and more logical elements to help us in conveniently and accurately interpreting the signs.”

Although Zhou Mingrui appeared indifferent, he was actually listening very carefully. It was only at this point that his empty mind slowly became heavy as his head began to feel a throbbing pain.

“Got it.” Audrey nodded in agreement. Following that, she emphasized, “That’s not what I meant. I’m not doubting the tarot cards, but I heard that Emperor Roselle had actually created another set of cards, secret and mysterious ones. They were paper cards which symbolized a particular unknown power. There were a total of twenty-two cards that he completed. Later on in life, he referenced them to create the twenty-two Major Arcana tarot cards which are used as a gaming tool. Was what I said correct?”

She looked at Zhou Mingrui as though she was attempting to get an answer from the mysterious Mr. Fool.

All Zhou Mingrui did was smile without saying a word. He cast his gaze at The Hanged Man as though he was putting him to the test.

Alger subconsciously straightened his back and said in a deep voice, “That’s right. It is said that Emperor Roselle had seen the Blasphemy Slate and that set of paper cards contain the profound mysteries of the twenty-two paths of the divine.” “Twenty-two paths of the divine...” repeated Audrey with a longing tone.

At that moment, Zhou Mingrui’s headache intensified. He felt that his invisible connection with the crimson stars and grayish-white fog was beginning to falter.

“Alright, that will be all for today’s gathering,” he said in a deep voice after making the decision immediately.

“By your will.” Alger bowed his head respectfully.

“By your will.” Audrey mimicked The Hanged Man.

She still had many questions and thoughts; thus, she was unwilling to have it end so soon.

As Zhou Mingrui severed the connection, he said with a smile, “Let us look forward to the next gathering.”

The ‘stars’ brightened once more as the crimson light receded like water. Just as Audrey and Alger heard Mr. Fool’s words, their figures turned into a blur as they phased away.

In a second, the ‘projection’ shattered as the gray fog restored its silence.

As for Zhou Mingrui, he felt himself turning heavy rapidly. His surroundings turned fleeting as his eyes met darkness before changing into dazzling sunlight.

He was still standing in the middle of his apartment.

“It was like a dream... What the heck was that foggy world... Who or what sort of power created the changes that just happened...” Zhou Mingrui sighed softly. He was completely puzzled as he walked towards the study desk as though his legs were filled with lead.

He picked up the pocket watch he placed outside to determine how much time had passed.

“Time flowed at the same pace.” Zhou Mingrui made a rough judgment.

After putting down his pocket watch, he found himself unable to endure the splitting headache any further. He sat on the chair and lowered his head, using his left thumb and middle finger to massage his temples.

After a long while, he suddenly let out a sigh and said in Mandarin, “From the looks of it, I won’t be able to return any time soon...”

Only the clueless could be fearless. After witnessing such a fascinating event and learning the situation regarding Beyonders and the mysterious world, Zhou Mingrui no longer dared to rashly try the luck enhancement ritual using ancient Feysac or Loen language.

Who knew what other kinds of situations would happen. Perhaps, it would be more bizarre, horrifying, or even a living hell!

“At the very least, I should attempt only when I have a deep mastery of mysticism,” thought Zhou Mingrui helplessly.

Thankfully, the so-called gathering could provide him with help.

After another bout of silence, he muttered to himself with a tone of dismay, disappointment, agony, and grief, “From this moment forth, I’m Klein.”

...

Klein tried his best to refocus his solutions and plans so as to purge the negative emotions in him.

Perhaps, he could learn the potion formula for ‘Spectator’ from the side...

The ‘gathering’ that just happened sure is fascinating. People who reside in different places across the world can reduce hundreds of kilometers to just mere inches and discuss face-to-face while supplying each other’s needs. Uh, speaking of which, this does sound a little familiar...

Klein was stunned for a few seconds before he burst out in laughter. Pressing against his temple, he jested under his breath,

“Wasn’t that a social networking platform?”

Whoosh!

Howling wind accompanied the downpour. The three-mast sailboat was tossed around by the crests and troughs of the incoming waves, as if it was being toyed by a giant.

The crimson glow in Alger Wilson's eyes faded. He found himself still remaining on the deck and nothing appeared to have changed.

Almost immediately, the quirky-shaped glass bottle in his palm shattered and the frost within melted into the rain. In seconds, there were no longer any traces left that suggested the existence of the wondrous antique.

A hexagonal crystal-like snowflake emerged on Alger's palm. It then faded rapidly until it was seemingly absorbed by the flesh, vanishing completely in the process. Alger nodded his head in a hardly noticeable manner, as if he was thinking about something. He remained still and silent for a full five minutes.

He turned around and headed for the cabin. As he was about to enter, a man who wore a similar robe embroidered with lightning patterns emerged from inside.

This man, who had soft blond hair, paused and looked at Alger. He held his right fist to his chest and said, "May the Storm be with you."

Alger replied with the same words and gesture. There were no emotions on his rough face which had a well-defined structure.

Alger entered the cabin after the greeting and proceeded to the captain's cabin situated at the far end of the corridor.

Surprisingly, he did not encounter any sailors on the way. The whole place was as quiet as a graveyard.

Behind the door to the captain's cabin, a soft brown carpet overlaid the floor. A bookshelf and a wine rack took the opposite side walls of the room. The books with their yellowish covers and wine bottles with their dark red color looked peculiar under the flickering candlelight.

On the desk with the candle, there was a bottle of ink, a quill, a black metallic telescope and a sextant made of brass.

Behind the desk sat a pale middle-aged man wearing a captain's hat which had a skull on it. As Alger approached him, he said menacingly, "I will not give in!"

"I believe you can do it," Alger said calmly, so calm that it felt like he was commenting on the weather.

"You..." The man seemed to be stunned by the unexpected answer.

At this very moment, Alger leaned forward slightly and suddenly dashed across the room until they were only separated by the desk.

Pa!

Alger tightened his shoulder and reached out his right hand to choke the man.

Illusory fish scales appeared on the back of his hand as he crazily mustered more strength to choke the man, giving him no time to respond.

Crack!

Amid the crisp cracking sound, the man's eyes widened as his body was lifted up.

His legs twitched furiously before they soon became motionless. His pupils began to widen as he stared aimlessly. There was a stench from between his legs as his pants gradually turned moist.

While lifting the man, Alger lowered his back and strode toward the wall.

Bang! He used the man as a shield and smashed forward at the wall. His extremely muscular arm was monstrous.

A hole cracked open in the wooden wall, and rain poured in, accompanied by the scent of the ocean.

Alger flung the man out of the cabin, straight into the giant waves that resembled mountains.

The wind continued to howl in the dark as almighty nature devoured everything.

Alger took out a white handkerchief and wiped his right hand carefully before throwing it into the sea as well.

He stepped back and waited patiently for company.

In less than ten seconds, the blond man from before rushed in and asked, "What happened?"

"The 'captain' has escaped," Alger answered in an annoyed manner as he panted. "I didn't know he still had some of his Beyonder powers."

"Damn it!" the blond man cursed softly.

He went up to the opening and stared into the distance. However, nothing was visible except for the waves and the rain.

"Forget it, he was just extra loot," the blond man said, waving his arm, "We will still be rewarded for finding this ghost ship from the Tudor Era."

Even if he was a Keeper of the Sea, he would not have hastily dived into the sea under this weather condition.

"The 'captain' will not be able to survive much longer if the storm continues." Alger said, as he nodded in approval. The wooden wall was repairing itself at a discernible rate.

He gazed at the wall and turned his head subconsciously towards the rudder and the sail.

He was perfectly aware of what was going on behind all the wooden planks.

The chief mate, the second mate, the crew, and the sailors were not present. There was no living person on board!

Amidst all the emptiness, the rudder and the sail moved eerily by themselves.

Alger again pictured "The Fool" who was covered in grayishwhite fog and sighed.

He turned back and looked outside at the mighty waves and spoke as though in a reverie while filled with anticipation and awe, "A new era has begun..."

...

Empress Borough, Backlund, capital of the Loen Kingdom.

Audrey Hall pinched her cheeks in disbelief of her encounter a while ago.

On the dressing table in front of her, the old bronze mirror had shattered into pieces.

Audrey cast her gaze downwards and saw the swirling "crimson" on the back of her hand; it was like a tattoo depicting a star.

The "crimson" gradually faded and disappeared into her skin.

Only at this point in time was Audrey certain that it was not a dream.

Her eyes twinkled as she grinned. She could not help but stand up before bending down to lift up the hem of her dress.

She curtseyed towards thin air and started dancing lively. It was the "Ancient Elf Dance, "the most popular dance among royalty at the moment.

She had a bright smile on her face as she moved about gracefully.

Knock! Knock! Someone suddenly knocked at her bedroom door.

“Who is it?” Audrey immediately stopped her dance and asked as she tidied her dress to look more elegant.

“My Lady, may I come in? You should start to prepare for the ceremony,” Audrey’s maidservant asked from outside the door.

Audrey looked into a mirror on the dressing table and quickly wiped the smile from her face, leaving only a tiny hint of a smile.

She responded gently after she had ensured everything was presentable, “Come in.”

The doorknob turned and Annie, her maidservant, pushed in.

“Oh, it cracked...” Annie said as she instantly saw the outcome of the old bronze mirror.

Audrey blinked and said slowly, “Erm, Yes! Susie was here just now. I am sure you know she likes to wreak havoc!”

Susie was a golden retriever that was not so much of a purebred. It was a gift given to her father, Earl Hall, when he bought a foxhound. Nevertheless, Audrey adored it.

“You should train it well,” Annie said, as she picked up the pieces of the bronze mirror adeptly and with care, lest it hurt her mistress.

As she finished tidying up, she asked Audrey with a smile, “Which dress do you want to put on?”

Audrey thought for a while and answered,” I like the dress designed by Mrs. Guinea for my 17th birthday.”

“No, you can’t wear the same dress twice to a formal ceremony or others will gossip about and question the Hall family’s financial ability,” Annie said, shaking her head in disagreement.

“But I really like it!” Audrey insisted in a gentle manner.

“You can wear it at home or when you attend an event that isn’t so formal,” Annie said firmly, suggesting that it was not negotiable.

“Then it will have to be the one with the frilly designs along the sleeves given by Mr. Sades two days ago,” Audrey said as she drew in a gasp inconspicuously, maintaining her sweet smile. “You always have such a good taste,” Annie said as she stepped back and shouted towards the door, “The sixth dressing room! Ah, forget it, I shall fetch it myself.”

Maidservants began to work. The dress, accessories, footwear, hat, makeup, and hairstyle—everything had to be taken care of.

When it was almost ready, Earl Hall appeared at the door wearing a dark brown waistcoat.

He had a hat sharing the same color as his clothes and a nice mustache. His blue eyes were filled with joy, but his loosening muscles, widening waist, and wrinkles were obviously destroying his handsome youth.

“The most dazzling jewel of Backlund, it is time for our departure,” Earl Hall said, knocking at the door twice.

“Father! Stop calling me that,” Audrey protested as she got up with the help of the maidservants.

“Well then, it’s time to set off, my beautiful little princess,” Earl Hall said as he bent his left arm, signaling Audrey to hold his arm.

Audrey shook her head slightly and said, “That is for my mother, Mrs. Hall, the Countess.”

“Then this side,” Earl Hall bent his right arm with a smile and said, “This is for you, my greatest pride.”

...

The Imperial naval base, Pritz Harbor, Oak Island.

When Audrey took her father's arm and walked down the carriage, she was suddenly shocked by the juggernaut in front of her.

In the military port not far away, there was a huge ship shimmering with metallic reflections. It did not have a sail, leaving only an observatory deck, two towering chimneys, and two turrets at the ends of the ship.

It was so majestic and large that the fleet of sails nearby were like newborn dwarfs clustering around a giant.

"Holy Lord of Storms..."

"Oh, m'lord."

"An ironclad warship!"

...

Amidst the furore, Audrey was also shocked by this unprecedented miracle created by mankind. It was an ocean miracle that had never been seen before!

It took a while for the aristocrats, ministers, and Members of Parliament to compose themselves. Then, a black spot on the sky started to grow in size until it occupied a third of the sky and entered everyone's view. The atmosphere suddenly became solemn.

It was a gigantic flying machine with a beautiful streamlined design hovering in mid-air. The deep blue machine had airbags made of cotton which were supported by alloy structures that were strong but light. The alloy structure's bottom had openings mounted with machine guns, projectile launchers, and muzzles. The exaggerated humming noise from the ignition steam engine and the tail blades produced a symphony that left everyone amazed.

The King's family arrived on their airship, exuding a lofty and indisputable authority.

Two swords, each with a ruby crown at the handle, were pointing vertically down and reflected the sunlight on both sides of the cabin. They were the "Sword of Judgment" emblem which symbolized the Augustus family and has been passed down from the previous epoch.

Audrey was not yet eighteen, so she had not attended the "introductory ceremony," which was an event led by the Queen that marked one's debut into the Backlund social scene, to announce her adult status. Therefore, she could not be nearer to the airship and had to remain silent at the back to watch the entire event.

Nevertheless, it did not matter to her. In fact, she was relieved that she did not need to deal with the princes.

The 'miracle' that mankind used to conquer the sky touched down gently. The first ones to step down the stairs were the handsome young guards who wore red ceremonial uniforms with white trousers. Decorated with medals, they formed two lines with rifles in hand. They were awaiting the appearances of King George III, his queen, and the prince and princess.

Audrey was not new to meeting important people so she showed no interest at all. Instead, she had her attention on the two statue-like black-armored cavalry flanking the king.

In this era of iron, steam, and cannons, it was surprising that there was still someone who could bear wearing full armor.

The cold metallic luster and the dull black helmet conveyed solemnity and authority.

“Could they be the higher-order Disciplinary Paladins...” Audrey recalled snippets of a casual conversation among adults. She was curious but did not dare go close.

The ceremony commenced with the arrival of the king’s family. The incumbent Prime Minister, Lord Aguesid Negan, went up to the front.

He was a member of the Conservative Party and the second nonaristocrat to become the Prime Minister till this very day. He was given the title of a Lord for his great contributions.

Of course, Audrey knew more. The main supporter of the Conservative Party was the present Duke of Negan, Pallas Negan, who was the brother of Aguesid!

Aguesid was a slender and almost bald fifty plus year old man with a sharp gaze. He surveyed the area before speaking.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe you have witnessed this history-making ironclad warship. It has dimensions of 101 by 21 meters. It has an amazing port and starboard design. The armor belt is 457 millimeters thick. The displacement is 10060 tonnes. There are four 305-millimeter main cannons, six rapid-fire cannons, 12 six-pound cannons, 18 six-barrel machine guns, and four torpedo launchers. It can reach a speed of 16 knots!

“It will be the real hegemon! It will conquer the seas!”

The crowd was roused. The mere descriptions were enough to instill fearful images in them, let alone the fact that the actual thing was right in front of them.

Aguesid smiled and spoke a few more lines before saluting the king and requested, “Your Majesty, please give it a name!”

“Since it will set sail from Pritz Harbor, it should be named “The Pritz,” George III responded. His expression showed his delight.

“The Pritz!”

“The Pritz!”

...

The words spread from the Navy Minister and the Admiral of the Imperial Navy to all the soldiers and officers on the deck. They all exclaimed in unison, “The Pritz!”

George III ordered the Pritz to set sail for a trial in the midst of the gun salutes and the celebratory atmosphere.

Honk!

Thick smoke spewed out from the chimneys. The sound from the machinery could be heard faintly beneath the sound of the ship horn.

The juggernaut departed from the harbor. Everyone was shocked when the two main cannons at the ship’s bow fired at an uninhabited island in its path.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The ground shook as dust shot up into the sky. Shock waves spread out, producing waves in the sea.

Satisfied, Aguesid turned back to the crowd and announced, “From this day on, doomsday will fall on the seven pirates who call themselves Admirals and the four who call themselves Kings. They can only shiver in fear!

“It is the end of their era. Only the ironclad warship will roam the seas no matter whether the pirates have the powers of the Beyonders, ghost ships, or cursed ships.”

Aguesid’s chief secretary deliberately asked, “Can’t they build their own ironclad warships?”

Some of the nobles and Members of Parliament nodded, feeling that such a possibility could not be eliminated.

Aguesid immediately smiled and shook his head slowly as he answered, “Impossible! It will never be possible! Building our ironclad warship required three big coal and steel amalgamators, a scale of more than twenty steel factories, 60 scientists and senior engineers from the Backlund Cannon Academy and Pritz Nautical Academy, two royal shipyards, almost hundred factories for spare parts, an Admiralty, a shipbuilding committee, a Cabinet, a determined king with excellent foresight, and a great country with an annual steel production of 12 million tonnes!

“The pirates will never achieve it.”

Having said that, he paused and raised his arms before shouting in agitation, “Ladies and gentlemen, the era of cannons and warships has dawned upon us!”

After half an hour of rest, Zhou Mingrui, who now viewed himself as Klein, finally recovered. In the meantime, he found that there were now four black dots on the back of his hand, which happened to form a small square.

These four black spots faded and disappeared quickly, but Klein knew that they were still hiding in his body, waiting to be awakened.

"Four spots forming a square; is it in correspondence with the four pieces of staple food at the four corners of the room? Does this mean that in the future, I don't need to prepare the food and can do the ritual and chants immediately?" Klein made a guess.

This might seem good, but the emergence of the spots was ominous, and "things" that one lacked understanding of were always scary.

The fact that those inexplicable Chinese Divinations from Earth could produce effects here, the strange transmigration in his sleep, the mysterious murmurings that almost drove him crazy during the ritual, and the mysterious and trippy gray world whose significance he had no idea of made Klein shiver in the hot weather of June.

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest fear is the fear of the unknown." He recalled this saying as he was experiencing the fear of the unknown acutely.

There was in him an unprecedented and irresistible urge to make contact with the mysterious domain, to learn more, and to explore the unknown. There was also a contradicting escape mentality within him compelling him to pretend nothing had happened.

Intense sunlight shone through the window onto the desk, making it appear as if grains of gold were sprinkled on it. Klein gazed at the desk, feeling as though he had come into contact with warmth and hope.

He relaxed slightly, and a strong sense of fatigue washed over him.

His eyelids were as heavy as lead as they kept closing themselves. It must have been the combined effect of the sleepless night and the tiring encounter.

Klein shook his head and pushed himself up with the aid of the desk. He stumbled towards the double-decked bed, completely disregarding the rye bread placed at the four corners of the room. He fell asleep immediately after he lay down.

Groan! Groan!

Klein was woken up by hunger pangs. When he opened his eyes, he felt rejuvenated.

"There's still a slight headache." He rubbed his temples and sat up. He was so hungry that he could eat a horse!

He returned to the desk while straightening his shirt. He picked up the silver vine-leaf pocket watch.

Pa!

The pocket watch's lid sprang open and the second hand was ticking.

Half past twelve. I slept for three hours... Klein put the pocket watch back into his linen shirt pocket while swallowing.

In the Northern Continent, there were 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes in an hour, and 60 seconds in a minute. Whether each second passed at the same rate here compared to Earth was unknown to Klein.

At this moment, he could not even think of terms such as mysticism, rituals or the grayish world. His mind was occupied by one thing—food!

He would leave thinking after his meals! Only then could he work!

Klein picked up the loaves of rye bread from the four corners and wiped off the minute specks of dust on it without any hesitation. He planned on making one of them his lunch.

He decided to dig into the offerings because he only had five pence with him and there was a tradition of eating the offerings back in his hometown. After all, there was not any observable change to the bread. It was better to be frugal.

Of course, the memory and habits left behind by the original Klein had also played a role.

It was a huge waste to use the expensive gas only to light up the room. So, Klein took out a furnace and boiled water with it after adding some coal. He paced around as he waited.

Anyone would choke eating those loaves of rye bread without water.

Yikes. Life with meat only for dinner is going to be dreadful... No, wait, this is already an exception. Melissa would only allow our meals to have meat twice a week if not for my upcoming interview, Klein thought, as he looked around, hungry. He had nothing better to do.

His eyes seemed to turn avaricious when he set his eyes on the pound of mutton in the cupboard.

No, I need to wait for Melissa to eat it together, Klein thought as he shook his head and rejected the idea of cooking half of it right now.

Although he often ate outside, he had still developed some basic culinary skills, owing to his living in a big city alone. His dishes were not delicious, but they were at least edible.

Klein turned his body around so that the mutton would not "seduce" him. Then, he suddenly realized that he had also bought peas and potatoes in the morning.

Potatoes! Klein immediately had an idea. He quickly turned back to the cupboard and took out two potatoes from a tiny pile of them.

He first cleaned the potatoes in the public bathroom and then added them into a pot so they were boiled together with the water.

After a while, he sprinkled into the water some yellow coarse salt from the spices container he found inside the cupboard.

He waited patiently for a few minutes before lifting the pot and pouring the "soup" into a few cups and a bowl. He took out the potatoes with a fork and placed them on the desk at the end.

Fffffff!

He blew at the potato as he peeled it bit by bit. The fragrance of boiled potato diffused through the air. It smelled very appetizing.

He salivated crazily; the heat could not deter him any longer. Klein took a bite despite having the potato only half peeled.

How fragrant! It had a powdery texture and tasted sweet as he chewed. He was instantly filled with emotions and he wolfed down the two potatoes. He even ate some of the skin.

Then, he held up the bowl and enjoyed the 'soup.' The pinch of salt in water proved to be thirst-quenching.

I really enjoyed eating potatoes this way when I was young... A filled Klein exclaimed in his head. Meanwhile, he tore off a small piece of bread and dipped it into the 'soup' to soften it before eating.

Perhaps the ritual was too tiring; Klein ate two loaves of bread which amounted to a whole pound.

Klein felt he was finally rejuvenated. He enjoyed the joy of life after he drank the 'soup' before tidying up. Then, he took in the lustrous sunshine happily.

He sat back at the desk and began planning.

I can't escape. I must think of a way to come into contact with mysticism and become a Beyonder as mentioned by Justice and The Hanged Man.

I need to overcome the fear of the unknown.

The only way now is to wait for the next 'gathering.' I need to see if I can learn the formula of the 'Spectator' potion or other things related to mysticism.

There are four more days before Monday. Before that, I need to first figure out the problem with Klein. Why did he commit suicide? What happened to him?

Unable to transmigrate back and wash his hands of everything, Klein picked up the notebook that lay on the table. He wanted to find hints that could help him regain his lost memory fragments.

The original Klein obviously had the habit of taking notes. He also liked to write diaries.

Klein was fully aware that the cabinet that supported the desk on the right stored a whole stack of completed notebooks.

The book he had began on the 10th of May. Matters regarding his school, and mentor, as well as content pertaining to knowledge were at the beginning.

"12th May. Mr. Azik mentioned that the common language used by the Balam Empire in the Southern Continent also developed from Ancient Feysac, a branch of Jotun. Why is this so? Does this mean that every sentient living being once spoke the same language? No, there has to be a mistake. According to 'The Revelation of Evernight' and 'The Book of Storms', giants were not the only hegemons of the world in primordial times. There were also elves, mutants, and dragons. Anyways, these are just myths and fantasies."

...

"16th May. Senior Associate Professor Cohen and Mr. Azik discussed the inevitability of the Age of Steam. Mr. Azik opined that it was just a coincidence because if it wasn't for Emperor Roselle, the Northern Continent would still be wielding swords like the Southern Continent. Mentor argued that Mr. Azik had placed too much emphasis on the contribution of an individual. He believes that with progress, even if there wasn't an Emperor Roselle, there would be an Emperor Robert. Therefore, the Age of Steam might come late, but eventually come nevertheless. I found little meaning in their discussion. I prefer discovering new things and unraveling the hidden past. Perhaps I am more suited to study archeology than history."

...

"29th May. Welch found me and told me that he had acquired a notebook from the Fourth Epoch. Oh my Goddess! A notebook from the Fourth Epoch! He didn't want to ask the archeology department's students for help so he came to Naya and me to help him decode the contents. How can I refuse? Of course, I can only do it after my graduation defense. I can't afford diverting my attention at this stage."

This caught Klein's attention. Compared to the notes about history and viewpoint disagreements, the appearance of a notebook from the Fourth Epoch might have led to Klein's suicide.

The Fourth Epoch was the epoch before the present "Iron Age." Its history was mysterious and incomplete. Due to the fact that very few tombs, ancient cities, and records had been found, archaeologists and historians could only refer to the ambiguous records provided by the seven major Churches that centered around their religious teachings to roughly form the 'original' picture. They knew the existence of the Solomon Empire, the Tudor Dynasty, and the Trunsoest Empire.

Having set his sights on solving the mystery and restoring history, Klein didn't have much interest in the first three eras, whose roots were closer to legends. He was more interested in the Fourth Epoch, also known as the Age of the Gods.

Hmm, so Klein was concerned for his future career and thus focused on the interview. But it was all futile... Klein could not resist exclaiming.

Universities were still very scarce and the majority of students were either from noble or wealthy families. As long as he did not have an extreme mindset, a commoner who had been admitted into university would have been able to build precious social connections through group discussions and networking events despite the prejudice and exclusion from the entrenched social circles.

The very generous Welch McGovern was an example. He was the son of a banker from Constant City, Midseashire, Loen Kingdom. He was used to asking Naya and Klein for help because they were always in the same group for work.

Without thinking further, Klein continued reading the notebook.

"18th June. I have graduated. Farewell, Khoy University!"

"19th June. I have seen the notebook. By comparing sentence structures and root words, I discovered that it is a modified form of ancient Feysac. More precisely, over the course of its thousand-year history, the Feysac language had changed

constantly, a little at a time."

"20th June. We have deciphered the contents of the first page. The author was a member of a family called Antigonus."

"21st June. He mentioned the Black Emperor. This is anachronistic with regards to the time this notebook is deduced to be written. Is Professor wrong? Is 'Black Emperor' a common title for every emperor of the Solomon Empire?"

"22nd June. The Antigonus family apparently had a very high standing in the Solomon Empire. The author mentions that he was making a secret transaction with a person named Tudor. Tudor? Is it related to the Tudor Dynasty?"

"23rd June. I am trying to restrain myself from thinking about the notebook and going to Welch's place. I need to prepare for the interview! It's very important!"

"24th June. Naya tells me that they have found something new. I think I need to check it out."

"25th June. From the new deciphered content, the author had accepted a mission to visit the 'Nation of the Evernight' situated at the summit of the highest peak of the Hornacis mountain range. Oh my Goddess! How can a nation exist at the summit of that peak which is over 6000 meters above sea level? How do they survive?"

"26th June. Are these strange things real?"

The record ended at this point. Zhou Mingrui transmigrated in the early hours of the 28th.

Which means to say that there was indeed an entry for June 27th, it's that line... Everyone will die, including me... Klein flipped to the page he first saw when he arrived, feeling goosebumps while he made the deduction.

In order to solve the mystery of the original Klein's suicide, he thought that he should visit Welch and take a look at the ancient notebook. However, with a lot of experience from novels, movies, and TV drama series, he suspected that if they were really related, this visit would be very dangerous—those who went investigating castles despite knowing that they were haunted served as a warning!

However, he had to go since escaping would never solve the problem. It would only make things worse, until it welled over and completely drowned him!

Perhaps call the police? But claiming to have committed suicide would be silly, right...

Knock!

Knock, knock!

There was a series of quick and forceful knocks.

Klein sat straight up and listened.

Knock!

Knock, knock!

The knocks echoed through the empty hallway.

"Who is it?"

Klein was thinking about the mysterious suicide of the original owner of this body and the unknown danger he might encounter when he heard the sudden knock on the door. He subconsciously opened the drawer, took out the revolver, and asked vigilantly.

The other party was quiet for two seconds before a slightly sharp voice, in Awwa's accent, replied, "It's me, Mountbatten, Bitsch Mountbatten."

The voice paused for a moment before adding, "The police."

Bitsch Mountbatten... When Klein heard this name, he immediately thought of the owner of this name.

He was the policeman in charge of the street where the apartment was located. He was a rude, brutal, hands-on man. But perhaps, only such a man could be a deterrent for alcoholics, thieves, part-time thieves, villains, and hooligans.

And his unique voice was one of his trademarks.

"Okay, I'll be right there!" Klein responded loudly.

He had planned to put the revolver back into the drawer but thinking that he had no idea why the police were outside and that they might search the room or do other things, he cautiously ran to the stove where the flames had already been extinguished and put the revolver in it.

Then he picked up the coal basket, shook a few pieces into the stove, covered the gun, and finally placed the kettle over the stove to conceal everything.

After doing all of that, he tidied up his clothes and quickly approached the door and murmured, "Sorry, I just had a nap."

Outside the door stood four policemen in black-and-white checkered uniforms with peak caps. Bitsch Mountbatten, the one with a brown beard, coughed and said to Klein, "These three inspectors have something to ask you."

Inspectors? Klein looked at the shoulder badges of the other three reflexively and found that two of them had three silver hexagons and one had two, both of which looked superior to Bitsch Mountbatten, who had only three chevrons.

As a history student, Klein did little to no research into the ranks of police epaulets, except that Bitsch Mountbatten often boasted of being a senior sergeant.

So these three are inspectors? Influenced by conversations with Benson, Welch, and his classmates, Klein had the common sense to make way and point into the room.

"Please come in. How might I help you?"

The leader of the three inspectors was a middle-aged man with sharp eyes. He seemed to be able to read the mind of a person and make them fearful. His eyes were wrinkled, and the edge of his hat revealed light brown hair. He looked around the room and asked in a deep voice, "Do you know Welch McGovern?" "What's wrong with him?" Klein quivered and blurted back.

"I'm the one asking the questions." The dignified middle-aged police inspector had a stern look in his eyes.

The inspector next to him, also wearing three silver hexagons, looked at Klein and smiled gently.

"Don't be nervous. It's just a routine questioning."

This policeman was in his thirties, with a straight nose and gray eyes that, like a lake in an ancient forest that no one visited, gave him an indescribable sense of depth.

Klein took a breath and organized his words.

"If you mean Welch McGovern, the graduate of Khoy University from Constant, then I'm sure I know him. We are classmates with the same mentor, Senior Associate Professor Quentin Cohen."

In the Loen Kingdom, "Professor" was not only a professional title, but also a position, just like the combination of professors and department deans on Earth. That meant there could only be one professor in a university's department. If an associate professor wanted to become professor, they had to wait for their superior to retire, or force out their superior with their abilities.

As talents needed to be retained, the kingdom's Higher Education Commission had added senior associate professors in the threelevel system of lecturers, associate professors and professors after years of observation. This title was given to anyone with high academic achievements or with enough seniority but did not make it to the position of professor.

At this point, Klein looked into the eyes of the middle-aged police inspector and thought for a second.

"To be honest, our relationship is quite good. During this period, I met with him and Naya frequently to interpret and discuss the Fourth Epoch notebook that belonged to him. Inspectors, did something happen to him?"

Instead of answering, the middle-aged police inspector looked sideways at his gray-eyed colleague.

The inspector with the peak cap and ordinary looks replied mildly, "I'm sorry, Mr. Welch has passed away."

"WHAT?" Despite having some hunches, Klein could not help but shout out in astonishment.

Welch died just like the original owner of this body?

That is a little scary!

"What about Naya?" Klein questioned hurriedly.

"Ms. Naya passed away too," the gray-eyed police inspector said quite calmly. "Both of them died in Mr. Welch's house."

"Killed?" Klein had a vague guess.

Perhaps it was suicide...

The gray-eyed inspector shook his head.

"No, the scene suggests that they committed suicide. Mr. Welch hit the wall with his head many times, covering the wall with blood. Ms. Naya drowned herself in a basin. Yes, the kind used to wash your face."

"That's impossible..." Klein's hairs stood on their ends as he seemed capable of imagining the strange scene.

A girl kneeling on a chair and burying her face into a basin filled with water. Her soft brown hair swaying in the wind, but her entire person remaining motionless. Welch falling to the ground and staring at the ceiling intently. His forehead in a complete blood-mangled mess, while the traces of the impact on the wall were evident with the streaks of blood...

The gray-eyed inspector continued, "We believe so too, but the autopsy results and the situation at the scene exclude factors such as drugs and external forces. They—being Mr. Welch and Ms. Naya—showed no signs of struggling."

Before Klein could speak again, he stepped into the room and asked, pretending to be casual, "When was the last time you saw Mr. Welch or Ms. Naya?"

As he spoke, he gestured with his eyes to his colleague with two silver hexagons.

He was a young police inspector and looked about the same age as Klein. With black sideburns and green pupils, he was good looking and had a poet's romantic temperament.

When he heard the question, Klein thought about it and answered it thoughtfully, "It should be June 26th, we were reading a new chapter in the notes. Then, I went home to prepare for my interview on June 30th. Uh, the interview was for the History Department of Tingen University."

Tingen was known as the city of universities. There were two universities, Tingen and Khoy, as well as technical schools, law colleges and business colleges. It was second only to Backlund, the capital.

As soon as he finished, he saw the young police inspector walk towards his desk in the corner of his eye and pick up the notes which resembled more of a diary.

Damn! I forgot to hide it!

"Hey!" Klein cried out.

The young inspector smiled back at him, but did not stop flipping through his notes, while the gray-eyed inspector explained, "This is a necessary procedure."

At this time, Bitsch Mountbatten and the dignified middle-aged police inspectors were just watching without interrupting or assisting in the search.

Where are your search warrants? Klein had intended to question them, but on second thought, the judicial system of the Loen Kingdom did not seem to have such a thing as search warrants. At least he did not know if there was one. After all, the police force had only been established for fifteen or sixteen years.

When the original owner of this body was still a child, they were still called Public Security Officers.

Klein couldn't stop it. He watched the young inspector flip through his notes, but the gray-eyed inspector did not ask any questions.

"What is this strange thing?" The young police inspector turned to the end of the notes and suddenly asked, "And what does this mean? 'Everyone will die, including me'..."

Isn't it common sense that everyone dies except for deities? Klein was prepared to quibble, but it suddenly occurred to him that he had planned to "connect" with the police in case of possible danger, but he had no reasons or excuses.

He made a decision in less than a second. Putting his hand over his forehead, he answered painfully, "I have no idea. I really have no idea... When I woke up this morning, I felt I wasn't quite right, as if I had forgotten something. It's especially true for whatever happened recently. I don't even know why I had written such a sentence."

Sometimes, being frank was the best way to solve a problem. Of course, it required skills. There were things that could be said and could not be said, and the order of what was said first mattered.

As an expert keyboard warrior, Klein was also good at sophistry. "That is ridiculous! Do you think we are fools?" Bitsch Mountbatten could not help but interject angrily.

This is such a bad lie that it insults the intelligence of his and his colleagues!

It's better for you to pretend to be mentally ill than to pretend to be an amnesiac!

"I'm speaking the truth," Klein responded frankly, looking into the eyes of Mountbatten and middle-aged police inspectors.

It really could not be more true.

"Maybe it is," the gray-eyed police inspector said slowly.

What? He really believed it? Klein was surprised himself.

The gray-eyed inspector smiled at him and said, “An expert will come in two days and believe me, she should be able to help you to recall your lost memories.”

Expert? Help me remember my memories? In the field of psychology? Klein frowned.

Hey, what if his memories of Earth were exposed? He suddenly felt like facepalming himself.

The young police inspector put down his notes and searched his desk and room. Fortunately, he focused on books instead of lifting the kettle.

“Well, Mr. Klein, thank you for your cooperation. We advise that you’d better not leave Tingen for the coming days. If you have to, please notify Inspector Mountbatten, or you’ll become a fugitive,” the gray-eyed police inspector warned.

That’s it? That’s it for today? No other questions with deeper investigations? Or taking me back to the police station to torture me for information? Klein was at a loss.

Nevertheless, he wanted to solve the odd turn of events brought about by Welch too. So he nodded.

“That wouldn’t be an issue.”

The inspectors exited the room one by one, and the young man at the end suddenly patted Klein on the shoulder.

“It’s really nice. Very lucky.”

“What?” Klein’s face was puzzled.

The green-eyed police inspector with a poet’s temperament smiled and said, “Generally speaking, the norm is for all the involved parties to die in such an event. We are very glad and fortunate to see you still alive.”

After that, he exited the room and closed the door behind him politely.

The norm is for everyone to die together? Very glad that I’m still alive? Fortunate that I’m still alive?

On this June afternoon, Klein was chilling all over.

The norm is for everyone to die together? Very glad that I'm still alive? Fortunate that I'm still alive?

Klein shivered and quickly ran to the door, trying to catch up with the policemen and ask for protection.

But as soon as he reached the handle, he suddenly stopped.

That officer talked so horribly about it, why didn't they protect me, an important witness or key lead?

Isn't that too careless?

Were they just probing me? Or maybe it's a bait?

All kinds of thoughts rushed into Klein's mind; he suspected that the police were still secretly "watching" him, observing his reaction.

He felt much calmer after thinking of this and was no longer so panicked. He slowly opened the door, deliberately shouting with a trembling voice at the staircase, "You guys will protect me, right?"

Tap, tap, tap...There was no response from the police officers, and there was no change in the rhythm of the contact between the leather shoes and the wooden stairs.

"I know! You'll do that!" Klein shouted again in a tone of feigned conviction, trying to act like a normal person that was in danger.

The sound of footsteps gradually weakened and disappeared into the bottom floor of the apartment.

Klein snorted and laughed, "Isn't that response too fake? Their acting skills are not up to standard!"

He did not run after them. Instead, he turned back to the room and closed the door behind him.

In the next few hours, Klein fully expressed what they called back in Foodaholic Empire, China—restlessness, nervousness, agitation, inadvertence and murmuring words that he did not understand. He did not slack just because there was no one around.

This is called the self-cultivation of an actor! He laughed at himself in his heart.

When the sun moved to the west, the clouds on the horizon appeared to be reddish-orange. Tenants in the apartment came home one after another; Klein shifted his focus elsewhere.

"Melissa is almost done with school..." He looked at the stove, lifted the kettle, peeled off the coal and took out the revolver.

Without pause or delay, he reached to the back of the board under the double-decked bed where more than ten wooden strips were staggered out.

After clipping the left wheel between a piece of wooden strip and board, Klein straightened up and waited uneasily, fearing that the police would burst open the door and rush into the room with guns in their hands.

If it was an Age of Steam, he was certain he would not be seen by anyone when he did that. However, there were extraordinary powers here, ones that he had proven through his own experiences.

After waiting for a few minutes, there was no movement at the door. There was only the chatter between two tenants who were heading for the Heart of the Wild Bar on Iron Cross Street.

"Phew." Klein exhaled, feeling assured.

All he needed to do was wait for Melissa's return and cook the stewed mutton with tender peas!

When the idea came to Klein's mind, his mouth seemed to taste the rich flavor of the gravy; he remembered how Melissa cooked stewed mutton with tender peas.

First, she boiled the water and stir-fried the meat. Then, she added onions, salt, a little pepper, and water. After a specific period of time, the peas and potatoes were added, and the stew was to be cooked for an additional forty or fifty minutes with the lid on.

“It’s indeed a simple and crude way to do it... Supported purely by the flavors of the meat itself!” Klein shook his head.

But there was no other way about it. It was hard for commoners to have many kinds of condiments and various cooking methods. They could only pursue simple, practical, and economical methods. As long as the meat was not burnt or spoiled, anything was good for people who could only eat meat once or twice a week.

Klein was not a very good cook himself and ordered takeout food most of the time. But by cooking three or four times a week, after many weeks of accumulated practice, he had a passing standard and felt that he would not let the pound of mutton down.

“When Melissa comes back to cook it, it will be done after 7:30pm. She would be starving by then... It’s time for her to see what real cooking is!” Klein made an excuse for himself. First, he started the fire again, went to the bathroom to collect water, and washed the mutton. Then he took out the kitchen boards and knives before chopping the mutton into tiny chunks.

As for the explanation for his sudden culinary skills, he decided to blame it on the dead Welch McGovern, who had not only hired a chef who was good at the Midseashire flavor, but also often created his own delicacies and invited people to try them.

Well, the dead cannot refute me!

Nevertheless, tsk, this is a world with Beyonders; the dead are not necessarily unable to speak. With that in mind, Klein felt a little guilty conscience.

He threw aside his confused thoughts and put the meat into the soup bowl. Then he took out the condiment box and added in a spoonful of the crude salt, half of which had begun yellowing. In addition, he cautiously took some black pepper grains from a special small bottle, mixing and marinating them together.

He placed the saucepan on the stove and, while waiting for it to heat up, Klein rummaged for the carrots from yesterday and cut them into pieces with the onions he bought today.

When he was done with his preparations, he took out a small can from the cupboard and opened it. There was not much lard left in it.

Klein took a spoonful, put it in the pan, and melted it. He added in the carrots and onions and stirred it for a while.

As the fragrance began to pervade, Klein poured all the mutton into the pot and fried it with care for a while.

He should have added cooking wine in the process, or red wine at least. However, the Moretti family did not have these luxuries and could only drink a glass of beer a week. Klein had to make do with whatever was available and poured in some boiled water.

After stewing for about twenty minutes, he opened the lid, put the tender peas and cut potatoes in it, and added a cup of hot water and two spoons of salt.

He closed the lid, lowered the fire, and exhaled satisfactorily, waiting for his sister to reach home.

As seconds turned into minutes, the fragrance in the room intensified. There was the allure from the meat, the rich smell of potatoes, and the refreshing scent of onions.

The smell gradually mixed up, and Klein swallowed his saliva from time to time, keeping track of the time with his pocket watch.

After more than forty minutes, some not-so-brisk but rhythmic footsteps approached. A key was inserted, the handle was turned, and the door opened.

Before Melissa came in, she whispered doubtfully, “Smells

good...”

With her bag still in her hand, she stepped in and glanced over at the stove.

“You made this?” Melissa took off her veil hat and her hand paused mid-air, looking at Klein in astonishment.

She twitched her nose and inhaled more of the fragrance. Her eyes quickly softened, and she seemed to find some confidence.

“You made this?” she asked again.

“Are you afraid I’d waste the mutton?” Klein smiled and returned with a question. Without waiting for an answer, he said to himself, “Don’t worry, I specifically asked Welch to teach me how to cook this dish. You know, he has a good cook.”

“First time?” Melissa’s eyebrows creased subconsciously, but they were smoothed by the fragrance.

“It looks like I’m talented.” Klein laughed. “It’s almost done. Put your books and veil hat down somewhere. Go to the bathroom and wash your hands, and then get ready to taste it. I’m very confident about it.”

When she heard her brother’s orderly arrangements and saw his gentle and calm smile, Melissa stood rooted at the door and failed to respond in her daze.

“Do you prefer the mutton to be cooked longer?” Klein urged with a laugh.

“Ah, okay, okay!” Melissa jolted back to her senses. With a handbag and veil in each hand, she rushed into the room quickly.

When the lid of the saucepan was uncovered, a sudden blast of steam appeared before Klein’s eyes. Two pieces of rye bread were already placed to the side of the mutton and tender peas, allowing them to absorb the fragrance and heat to become soft.

By the time Melissa had packed her items, washed her hands and face, and returned, a plate of stewed mutton with tender peas, potatoes, carrots and onions was already placed on the table. Two pieces of rye bread, colored by a light dip into the gravy, were on their plates.

“Come on, try it.” Klein pointed to the wooden fork and spoon next to the plate.

Melissa was still a little confused. She didn’t refuse; she picked up a potato with her fork, put it into her mouth and bit it lightly.

The taste of the starchy potato and gravy fragrance flooded her mouth. Her saliva secretion went crazy as she gobbled down the potato in a few mouthfuls.

“Try the mutton.” Klein gestured at the plate with his chin.

He had tasted it just now and thought it was barely at a passing standard, but it was enough for a girl who was inexperienced with what the world had to offer. After all, she only ate meat occasionally.

Melissa’s eyes were filled with anticipation as she carefully forked some mutton.

It was very tender and, as soon as it entered the mouth, nearly melted. The fragrance of the meat exploded in her mouth, filling it with delicious meat juices.

It was an unprecedented feeling that made Melissa unable to stop eating.

By the time she realized it, she had already eaten several pieces of the mutton.

“I... I... Klein, this was supposed to be prepared for you...” Melissa blushed and stammered.

“I’d nibbled some of the food just now. It’s the privilege of being a cook.” Klein smiled and soothed her sister. He picked up his fork and spoon. At times, he would eat a piece of meat and sometimes, he would stuff his mouth full of peas. At other times, he would put down the utensils, break off a piece of rye bread and dip it in gravy.

Melissa relaxed and was immersed in the delicacy again by Klein’s normal behavior.

“It’s really delicious. It doesn’t seem like you were doing it for the first time.” Melissa looked at the empty dish and praised him with all her heart. Even the gravy was finished.

“It’s a long way from Welch’s chef. When I’m rich, I’ll take you and Benson out to the restaurant and have a better meal!” Klein said. He was beginning to look forward to it himself.

“Your interview... Burp...” Melissa did not finish her words because she suddenly let out a sound of contentment involuntarily.

She put her hand over her mouth in a hurry and looked embarrassed.

The fault is with the stewed mutton with tender peas just now! It was just too delicious.

Klein laughed secretly and decided not to make fun of his sister. He pointed to the plate and said, “This is your mission.”

“All right!” Melissa stood up immediately, took the basin and rushed out the door.

When she came back, she opened the cupboard to check the condiment box and other items as per normal.

“Did you just use them?” Melissa was surprised, and turned to Klein, holding the black pepper bottle and lard can.

Klein shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

“Just a little. It’s the price of a delicacy.”

Melissa’s eyes twinkled, her expression changing for a few moments, before she finally said, “Let me cook in the future.”

“Um... You have to hurry up and prepare for the interview. You have to think about your job.”

Melissa, can you not rub in it... Klein muttered inwardly. He felt a throbbing pain in his head.

The amount of content Klein had forgotten wasn't considered a lot, but neither was it negligible. The interview was in two days, so how could he find the time to make up for it...?

Furthermore, he was involved in such strange paranormal activity, so how would it be possible that he would be in the mood to revise?

Klein gave his sister a perfunctory response and began putting on the appearance of studying. Melissa moved a chair over to sit beside him. With light shining from the gas lamp, she began working on her assignments.

The atmosphere was serene. When it was almost eleven o'clock, the siblings bade each other goodnight and went to bed.

...

Knock!

Knock! Knock!

Poundings on the door roused Klein from his dreams.

He peered out of the window to see the first glimmer of dawn. In a daze, he flipped over and sat up.

"Who is it?"

Look at the time now! Why didn't Melissa wake me up?

"It's me. Dunn Smith," a man with a deep voice outside the door replied.

Dunn Smith? Don't know him... Klein got off his bed and shook his head as he walked towards the door.

He opened the door to see the gray-eyed police inspector whom he had met the day before standing in front of him.

Alarmed, Klein asked, "Is there something wrong?"

The policeman replied with a stern look, "We found a carriage driver. He testified that you had gone to Mr. Welch's place on the 27th—the day when Mr. Welch and Ms. Naya died. Furthermore, Mr. Welch was the one who paid for your transportation fees."

Klein was startled. He did not feel a tinge of fear or guilt that one would expect from having his lies exposed.

It was because he was not even lying. In fact, he was surprised by the evidence provided by Dunn Smith.

On the 27th of June, the former Klein had indeed gone to Mr. Welch's place. On the night that he returned, he killed himself, the exact same way as Welch and Naya did!

Klein gave a forced smile and said, "This is insufficient evidence. It does not directly prove that I am associated with the death of Welch and Naya. Honestly speaking, I'm also very curious about the whole incident. I want to know what exactly happened to my two poor friends. But... But... I really can't remember. In fact I have almost completely forgotten what I had done on the 27th. You may find it hard to believe, but I fully relied on the diaries I had written to roughly make a guess that I had gone to Welch's place on the 27th."

"You sure have great mental fortitude," Dunn Smith said while nodding. He showed not a trace of anger; nor was he smiling.

"You should be able to hear my sincerity," Klein looked him straight in the eye and said.

I'm telling the truth! Of course, only part of it!

Dunn Smith did not give an immediate response. He swept his glance across the room before saying slowly, "Mr. Welch lost a revolver. I guess... I should be able to find it here. Right? Mr. Klein?"

Indeed... Klein finally understood where the revolver had come from. A thought flashed in his mind and he came to the final verdict in an instant.

He raised his hands halfway and retreated, leaving a path open. Then, he signaled at the bunk bed with his chin.

"Behind the bed board."

He did not specifically mention that it was the bottom deck, as no one would normally hide things at the back of the bed board on an upper deck. That would be too obvious for guests to notice at a glance.

Dunn Smith did not move forward. The corners of his mouth twitched as he asked, "Nothing to add on?"

Without hesitation, Klein replied, "There is!"

"Yesterday, when I woke up in the middle of the night, I realized I was laying on my desk with a revolver beside me. There was a bullet at the corner of the room. It was as if I had committed suicide. But due to a lack of experience of never having used a gun, or maybe I was too scared at the final moment... Anyway, the bullet did not achieve the desired result, my head is still in its place. I am still alive now.

"And since then, I have lost some memories, including what I saw and did at Welch's place on the 27th. I'm not lying. I really can't remember."

For the sake of being eliminated as a suspect. For the sake of getting rid of all these strange events surrounding him, Klein explained almost everything that had happened. Except, the transmigration and "gathering."

Also, Klein was careful with his words, allowing every sentence to be amenable. Such as, not revealing the fact that the bullet had hit his brains, but only mentioning that it did not achieve the desired result, and that his head was still in its place.

To others, these two statements might seem to convey the exact same ideas, but in reality they were like chalk and cheese.

Dunn Smith listened quietly, then said, "This corresponds with what I had surmised. It also corresponds with the hidden logic of similar incidents in the past. Of course, I have no idea how you managed to survive."

"I'm glad you believe in me. I don't know how I survived either." Klein heaved a small sigh of relief.

"But—" Dunn threw out a conjunction. "There is no use in me believing you. You are currently the prime suspect. You have to be confirmed by an 'expert' that you have indeed forgotten what you went through, or that you indeed have nothing to do with the deaths of Mr. Welch and Miss Naya."

He coughed, his expression becoming serious.

"Mr. Klein, I seek your cooperation on coming with me to the police station for the investigation. This should take roughly two to three days if it is confirmed that there are no issues with you." "The expert is here?" Klein asked blankly in return.

Didn't they say it would take another two days?

"She came earlier than expected." Dunn turned sideways, signaling for Klein to leave.

"Allow me to leave a note," Klein requested.

Benson was still away and Melissa had gone to school. He could only leave a note to inform them that he was involved in an incident associated with Welch so that they would not worry about him.

Dunn nodded, barely minding.

"Alright."

Klein returned to the desk. As he searched for paper, he began thinking about what was about to occur.

Honestly speaking, he did not wish to meet the 'expert.' After all, he had a bigger secret.

In a place where there were seven major churches, under the premise that Emperor Roselle, who was suspected to be a transmigrator predecessor, was assassinated, a thing like 'transmigration' usually meant having to go to court and enter arbitration!

But, without weapons, combat skills, or superpowers, he was no match for a professional policeman. What's more, a few of Dunn's subordinates were standing in the dark outside.

Once they draw their guns and shoot at me, I'd be finished!

"Ugh, I'll take one step at a time." Klein left the note, grabbed his keys, and followed Dunn out the room.

Along the dark aisle, four policemen in black-and-white checkered uniforms split into pairs and guarded them on both sides. They were very alert.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein followed alongside Dunn as they went down the wooden stairs which occasionally creaked in protest.

Outside the apartment, there was a four-wheeled carriage. On the side of the carriage, there was the "two crossed swords and a crown" police emblem. Their surroundings were crowded and bustling with noise as usual.

"Go on, up." Dunn signaled for Klein to go first.

Klein was just about to step forward when an oyster seller suddenly grabbed a customer and claimed that he was a thief.

Both parties wrestled and triggered a response from the horses, causing great chaos.

An opportunity!

There wasn't much time for Klein to think any further; he bent forward and dashed towards the crowd.

Either shoving or dodging, he escaped frantically towards the other end of the street.

Right now, for the sake of not "meeting" the expert, he could only proceed by going to the pier outside the city, taking a boat down the Tussock River and escaping to the capital, Backlund. The population was higher there, making it easier to hide.

Of course, he could also get on a steam train, go eastward to the nearest Enmat Harbor and take the sea route to Pritz, then towards Backlund.

Not long after, Klein arrived at a street and made a turn onto Iron Cross Street. There were several carriages that could be hired.

"To the pier outside the city." Klein reached out his hand and hopped onto one of the carriages.

He had thought through things clearly. Firstly, he had to mislead the police that were coming for him. Once the carriage was a suitable distance away from them, he would jump right off!

"Alrighty." The carriage driver tugged at the reins.

Clop! Clop! Clop... The carriage left Iron Cross Street.

Just as Klein was about to jump off the carriage, he noticed that it had turned into another road. It wasn't leading out of the city!

"Where are you going?" Klein blurted in his momentary daze.

"To Welch's place..." the carriage driver answered monotonously.

What!? Klein was at a loss for words. The carriage driver turned around, exposing his cold gray eyes. It was Dunn Smith, the gray-eyed policeman!

"You!" Klein was flustered. Everything suddenly became a blur as though the world spun around him when he instantly sat up.

Sat up? Klein looked around, confused. He noticed the crimson moon outside the window and the room being covered in a crimson veil.

He reached out with his hand to feel his forehead. It was all moist and cold. Cold sweat. His back felt exactly the same.

"It was a nightmare..." Klein heaved a sigh. "All is well... All is well..."

He found it weird. He was rather clear-minded in his dream, he was even able to think calmly!

After calming down, Klein looked at his pocket watch. It was only two in the morning. He got out of bed quietly and planned to head to the washroom where he could wash his face and empty his burgeoning bladder.

He opened the door and walked along the dark corridor. Under the dim moonlight, he walked lightly towards the washroom.

Suddenly, he noticed a silhouette outside the window at the end of the corridor.

That silhouette was wearing a black trench coat that was shorter than a coat, but longer than a jacket.

That silhouette was partly camouflaged in the darkness, bathing in the crimson moonlight.

That silhouette turned around slowly. His eyes deep, gray, and cold.

Dunn Smith!

Plop!

Klein could not help but take a step back. For a moment he was unsure if he was awake or still in his dreams.

The silhouette took off his black top hat and bowed a little as he said with a smile, “Reintroducing myself, Nighthawk, Dunn Smith.”

Nighthawk? One of the codenames of the Church of Evernight’s Beyonder teams which ‘Justice’ and ‘The Hanged Man’ mentioned before? Klein suddenly realised something, and exclaimed after making a connection, “You can control dreams? You just made me dream of that?”

Nighthawk Dunn Smith wore his black hat again, concealing his slightly high hairline. With deep gray eyes he said, “No, I only entered your dream and made the necessary guidance.”

His voice was deep and soothing; it reverberated through the dimly lit corridor without disturbing the sweet dreams of others, “In dreams, even though much of your usually suppressed emotions and various dark thoughts in you are amplified— making everything seem chaotic, absurd, and crazy— they are all rooted in reality since reality exists. For veterans like me, everything is crystal clear. Compared to a conscious you, I believe the you in your dreams more.”

This... What normal human being could control his dream? If I had dreamed of something on Earth, wouldn’t Dunn Smith have noticed? Klein was petrified by what had happened in the dream.

Yet he quickly found it bizarre. He remembered being very much sober and rational—knowing what to say and what not to say.

To put it simply, it did not feel like dreaming at all!

So, Dunn Smith only “saw” what I wanted him to see?

Klein’s mind whirled as he gained a glimmer of understanding.

This is a perk that resulted from transmigration? Like having a special body and soul? Or was it the effects of that luck enhancement ritual?

“So, Mr Smith, do you believe that I really lost my memory?” Klein organized his thoughts and asked in reply.

Dunn Smith did not answer him directly. Instead he looked at him keenly.

“You are actually not surprised by the course of events?”

“I’ve met people who wouldn’t believe in the power of the Beyonders, and they would rather believe that they haven’t really woken up.”

Klein tersely acknowledged as he said, “Perhaps, I have always been praying, hoping that there was such power to help me.”

“An interesting train of thought... Perhaps you survived not only because you were lucky.” Dunn nodded expressionlessly. “I can now confirm that you really lost parts of your memories due to the incident, especially those related to it.”

“So can I go back now?” Klein heaved a long sigh of relief in his heart as he probed.

Dunn placed a hand in his pocket and walked slowly towards Klein, the surrounding darkness becoming tranquil and gentle.

“No, you still have to come with me to see the expert,” he smiled politely and said.

“Why?” Klein blurted out, then added, “You don’t believe in the findings from my dream?”

You must be joking, if that "expert" specializes in hypnosis or mind-reading and stuff, then wouldn't my biggest secret be exposed?

The consequences would be beyond imagination!

"I'm quite humble usually, but I'm still confident for things related to dreams." Dunn calmly replied, "However, for important key matters, there is no harm in confirming them again. Plus, our specialties lie in different areas. Perhaps, she can help you recover some of your memories."

Not waiting for Klein to reply, his voice turned deeper. "After all you're connected to the whereabouts of that Antigonus family notebook."

"What?" Klein froze.

Dunn stopped in front of him, locking his gray eyes on Klein's eyes and said, "At the scene of the suicide, there was not a single trace of that notebook from the Fourth Epoch. Welch is dead, Naya is dead; you are our only lead."

"...Alright then." Klein went silent for a moment before exhaling.

A missing notebook... now this is really peculiar!

How did I not think about the whereabouts of that notebook from the Fourth Epoch!

Dunn nodded slightly, walking past Klein and said, "Lock your door and come with me to Welch's apartment, the expert is waiting for us there."

Klein took in a silent breath. His heart was thumping wildly as he felt uneasy.

He wanted to decline and even had the intention to run. However, he believed that with what had happened in his dreams, Dunn Smith would have definitely heightened his level of guard. And with the difference in strength between a normal human and a Beyonder, there was little chance of success by using force.

He must have a revolver with him too... He must also have had practice using the revolver...

Many thoughts flashed past his mind, and eventually Klein chose to accept the reality.

"Alright."

Sigh, I can only take one step at a time and see how things unfold; maybe, that miraculous power in my dream will take effect again...

"Then let's go," Dunn said in an indifferent tone.

Klein turned and followed. After taking two steps, he suddenly stopped and said, "Mr. Smith, I... I would like to use the bathroom first."

I came out originally for the bathroom...

Dunn did not stop him. Instead, he gave him a keen look and said, "No problem, Klein. Believe me, I am far more powerful than you can imagine in the dark night."

In the dark night... Klein silently repeated this phrase.

He did not make any reckless attempt to escape and honestly relieved himself. He then washed his face with cold water, completely calming himself down.

Klein changed his outfit and closed the door to his apartment. With gentle steps, Klein followed Dunn down the stairs and walked towards the building's entrance.

In such a tranquil setting, Dunn Smith opened his mouth and spoke suddenly, "At the end of the dream, why did you try to escape? What were you afraid of?"

Klein immediately thought of an answer as he said, "I do not remember what I did at Welch's place, nor do I remember if I was directly involved in Welch's and Naya's deaths. I was afraid that if it was

really proven to be my doing, I would rather gamble and escape. I can then start anew in the Southern Continent."

"I would've done the same if I were you," Dunn said as he pushed open the door to the building, letting in the cool midnight breeze to disperse the sweltering heat inside.

He was not afraid of Klein running away as he got on the carriage. It was exactly the one Klein had dreamed of—a fourwheeled carriage drawn by a single horse and the carriage driver. There was also the police emblem of double-crossed swords that clustered a crown carved onto the side of the carriage.

Klein followed into the carriage. Inside, there was a thick carpet laid out and the place was filled with a soothing fragrance.

Having sat down, he looked for a topic to probe for more information.

"Mr. Smith, what if—and I mean if—the 'expert' confirms that I have really forgotten a part of my memories? And that there is no other evidence which points to me being the perpetrator or a victim, would this be over?"

"In theory, yes. We will try to search for the notebook through other means. As long as it exists, it can be found. Of course, before that, we will have to make sure you are not cursed or have any scent of cacodemons and that there are no related psychological problems lingering. We must ensure that you can embrace the rest of your life peacefully and healthily." Dunn Smith had a smile on his face, a rather unusual smile.

Klein caught on to this point keenly, and promptly inquired, "In theory?"

"Yes, only in theory. In this field of work, there are always twisted, unorthodox, and inexplicable things happening." Dunn looked Klein in the eye and said, "Their continuation or end are not what we can foresee or control at times."

"For example?" Klein actually felt frightened for a moment.

The carriage sped through an almost empty street. Dunn took out his tobacco pipe and sniffed it, saying, "When we believe that things have come to an end, with everything going back to normal, it would resurface in a terrifying, chilling way."

"A few years ago, we handled a case regarding an evil cult. They did live sacrifices to please an evil god by making followers commit suicide. When one of the followers was chosen, his survival instincts triumphed over his foolishness, twisted beliefs, and psychedelic drugs. He secretly escaped and reported to the police.

"The case was handed over to us. It was a very small mission, since there were no Beyonders in that cult. The deity they worshiped was actually randomly thought up by their leader merely for the sake of money and satisfaction. Humanity was lost there.

"We only used two members, coupled with the support from the police, to suppress this cult. No one was off the hook. For that whistleblower, we also confirmed that he had no lingering demonic scent left on him. He was not cursed and did not suffer any mental disorders. He didn't have any personality problems or any other irregularities, nothing.

"Later, he got a decent advancement in his career, got married to a very good wife, had a son and a daughter. His dark past seemed far away from him. The horror and bloodshed seemed to have completely vanished."

At this point, Dunn Smith gave out a laugh and said, "Yet in March this year, despite being in good financial health and having a loving wife and adorable kids... he strangled himself to death in his own office."

The crimson moonlight outside the carriage window shone upon Dunn Smith.

At that instance, his seemingly self-derisive smile made Klein feel unspeakably horrified.

“Strangled himself to death...” Klein drew in a gasp of cool air silently, as if seeing his own tragic end.

Even if I escaped it once, it might just be temporary?

Is there any way to resolve this completely?

Become a Beyonder to fight it?

The carriage returned to silence. Countless thoughts welled in Klein’s mind.

Under an awkward silence, the carriage traveled for a long time at high speeds.

Just as Klein made up his mind to consult Dunn Smith for any solutions, the carriage came to a halt.

“Mr. Smith, we have reached Welch’s apartment.” The carriage driver’s voice was heard.

“Let’s get down.” Dunn straightened out his black trench coat that reached his knees.

“Oh, let me introduce beforehand, the official disguise of the ‘expert’ is the most renowned spirit medium of Awwa County.”

Klein suppressed his other thoughts and asked curiously, “Then what is her actual identity?”

Dunn half-turned his body and turned his head back, with his abstruse gray eyes he said, “A true Spirit Medium.”

CHAPTER 14: THE MEDIUM

A true medium... Klein repeated this description inwardly, and did not speak again. He followed Dunn Smith down the carriage.

Welch’s place in Tingen was a detached house with a garden. The road outside the hollowed metal gates allowed four carriages to pass through at once. Street lamps lined the sides of the road every fifty meters. They looked different from the ones Klein had seen in his previous life. They were gas lamps and the height of every lamp was about that of an adult male so that it was convenient to light the lamps.

The black metal was closely appressed to the glass, forming a checkered pattern, casting out classical paper lantern-like ‘artworks.’ Coldness and warmth were intertwined while darkness and light coexisted.

Walking along the pathway blanketed by rays from the sunset, Klein and Dunn Smith entered Welch’s rented place through the ajar metal gate.

Facing the main entrance was a cemented road that led straight to a two-floored bungalow. Two carriages could go at once.

There was a garden on the left and a lawn to the right. The pleasantly faint fragrance from the flowers mixed with the cool scent of the fresh grass made one feel happy and relaxed.

As soon as he stepped in, Klein shivered and peered around.

He felt that in the garden, somewhere in the lawn, on the roof, behind the swing, somewhere in a dark corner, pairs of eyes were observing him!

There was clearly no one here; yet, Klein felt as if he was on a crowded street.

This strange contrast—this peculiar feeling—tensed him up. A chill ran up his spine.

“Something’s wrong!” he couldn’t help but exclaim to Dunn.

Dunn’s expression remained unchanged as he walked beside him and replied calmly, “Just ignore them.”

Since the “Nighthawk” had said so, Klein tolerated the chilling feeling of not being able to notice the perpetrator despite being followed, spied, and observed. Step by step, he arrived at the main entrance of the bungalow.

If this goes on any longer, I will go crazy... As Dunn reached out his hand to knock on the door, Klein quickly turned around. Flowers swayed in the wind, without a person in sight.

“Come in, gentlemen.” A seemingly ethereal voice came from inside the house.

Dunn turned the doorknob, pushed the door open and said to a woman on the sofa, “Daly, any results?”

The chandelier in the living room was unlit. A set of two leather couches surrounded a marble coffee table.

On the table was a lit candle, but the light emitted a cobalt blue glow. It covered the half-enclosed living room, dining room, and kitchen in a strange, eerie hue.

On the middle of the sofa sat a lady in a hooded black robe who wore blue eyeshadow and blush. An exposed silver bracelet with a hanging white crystal pendant was worn around her wrist.

At the first sight of her, Klein had an inexplicable feeling. She was dressed just like a real medium...

Was she stereotyping herself?

Daly, the “medium” with uncanny beauty, took a quick glance at Klein with her twinkling emerald eyes. She looked at Dunn Smith and said, “The original spirits have all disappeared, including that of Welch’s and Naya’s. Right now, all these little rascals know nothing at all.”

Spirits? Spirit Medium... All the invisible things that were spying on him previously were spirits? There were so many of them? Klein removed his hat and placed it across his chest, bowing slightly as he said, “Good evening, Madam.”

Dunn Smith sighed. “That’s tricky...”

“Daly, this is Klein Moretti. See if you can get anything out of him.”

The medium, Daly, shifted her gaze onto Klein immediately. She pointed at a single armchair and said, “Please, take a seat.” “Thank you.” Klein nodded, took a few steps over, and sat down obediently. His heart raced uncontrollably.

Whether I survive, whether I get through this successfully or have my secrets exposed will all depend on whatever happens next!

And the thing that made him feel the most helpless was that he had nothing to rely on. He could only place his hopes on his inherent specialness...

This feeling really sucks... Klein thought bitterly.

Next, Dunn sat on the two-seater sofa opposite of Klein. Daly took out two thumb-sized glass bottles from her waist pouch.

Her emerald eyes smiled at Klein as she said, “I need a bit of help here. After all, you are not an enemy, I can’t treat you harshly. That might make you uncomfortable or put you in pain. It might even leave some serious after-effects on you. I will give you some fragrances, making you feel tender and smooth, which will allow you to let loose bit by bit so that you can truly indulge in those feelings.”

That sounded wrong... Klein gaped as his eyes were filled with shock.

Seated across him, Dunn laughed and said, “Don’t be weirded out. We are different from the fellows from the Church of Storms. Here, the ladies can also verbally tease men. In this regard, you should be able to understand. Your mother was a devout believer of the Goddess. You and your brother used to attend Sunday school at Church.”

“I understand. It’s just that I never thought that she would be such a... such a...” Klein gestured, as he could not find the right words. He almost blurted out the direct translation for “veteran driver [1]”.

Dunn curved the corners of his mouth up and said, “Don’t worry. Actually, Daly seldom does this. She just wants to use these methods to calm you down. She prefers corpses over men.”

“You make me sound perverted,” Daly interjected with a smile.

She opened one of the little bottles and dripped a few drops onto the bright blue candle flame.

“Night vanilla, slumber flower, and chamomile, all distilled and extracted to form this aromatic floral essence. I call it ‘Amantha;’ it means tranquility in the Hermes language. It smells really amazing.”

As they chatted, the candle flame flickered, evaporating the floral essence and filling the room with its aroma.

A beautifully enchanting aroma found its way into Klein’s nostrils. He no longer felt tensed up. He was instantly calm as if he was gazing into the darkness of the silent night.

“This bottle is called the Eye of the Spirit. Barks and leaves of drago and poplar trees are sun-dried for seven days and decocted thrice. Then, they are immersed in Lanti Wine. Of course, there would be several incantations while we’re at it...” As Daly described the liquid, the amber substance dripped onto the cobalt blue candle flame.

Upon smelling the ethereal scent of the aromatic wine, Klein noticed that the candle flame was dancing wildly. The luster of Daly’s blue eyeshadow and blush shone oddly, to the extent of him seeing double.

“It is a great helping hand for mediumship. It is also a floral essence that is sufficiently enchanting...”

As Daly explained continuously, Klein felt as if her voice was coming from all around.

Bewildered, Klein looked around and realized that everything was swaying and in a blur. He felt like he was shrouded by layers and layers of fog. Even his body was swaying as it phased away before he began floating and then losing his balance.

Colors blended like an impressionist painting—the reds were redder, the blues were bluer, and the blacks were blacker— appearing more defined than usual. It was dreamy and hazy. Distinct murmurs from the surroundings came through as if hundreds and thousands of people who could not be seen were debating.

“This feels similar to the luck enhancement ritual I did before, but without the kind of madness that makes your head feel like exploding...” Klein looked around and thought questioningly.

At this moment, his vision was locked onto a pair of eyes that were crystal clear like emerald. On a blurry “sofa” sat Daly in a black robe. Eccentrically, her gaze concentrated on the tip of Klein’s head. She smiled and in a gentle voice, said, “Let me properly introduce myself. I am the Spirit Medium, Daly.”

I can still... have rational thoughts... It’s like when I was at that luck enhancement ritual and that gathering... The thought crossed Klein’s mind as he intentionally behaved muddled and said, “Hello there...”

“The mental worlds of humans are extremely vast. Many secrets are hidden within the mind. Look at the ocean—what we know about it is all on the superficial level. But in reality, deep in the ocean, there is a larger unseen portion. Other than islands, there is the entire ocean. There is the boundless sky that symbolizes the spiritual world...

“You are the spirit of your body. Not only do you know of the islands above, but you also know of the things hidden beneath the sea, as well as the entire ocean...

“Anything that exists leaves some traces behind. The superficial memories of the islands may be wiped out, but what is left under the sea and the entire ocean will definitely have a corresponding projection left in it...”

Daly went on and on, bewitching Klein. The vague surrounding winds and shadows took on similar forms. It was as though Klein’s spirit was fully exposed in the form of an ocean, waiting for him to search and discover.

Klein watched patiently, as he ‘churned’ the ocean occasionally. Then, in an airy voice, he replied, “No... I can’t remember... I have forgotten...”

He expressed his agony at just the right level.

Daly tried to guide him once again, but the clear-headed Klein was unaffected.

“Okay. We shall end here. You may leave.”

“Leave.”

“Leave...”

The airy voice lingered and Daly disappeared. The wind and shadows began calming as the ethereal smell and subtle scent of the aromatic wine became more distinct again.

The colors returned to their normal state and the fuzzy feeling was no longer around. Klein’s body quivered, and he found his balance again.

He opened his eyes, which he had no memory of closing, and noticed that the candle with the bright blue flame was still before him. Dunn Smith was still resting comfortably on the couch. Same for Daly with the black-hooded robe.

“Why did you use the theory that belongs to that bunch of evil madmen, the Psychology Alchemists?” Dunn furrowed his eyebrows and stared at Daly.

As Daly put away the two little bottles, she replied calmly, “I think it’s pretty accurate. At least, it corresponds with some of the things I’ve made contact with before...”

Without waiting for Dunn’s reply, Daly shrugged and said, “This tricky fellow did not leave a single trace behind.”

Upon hearing this, Klein heaved a huge sigh of relief. Pretentiously, he asked, “Oh, it’s over? What happened? It felt like I just took a nap...”

That was a pass, right?

Thankfully, I had the ‘luck enhancement ritual’ as a rehearsal!

“Just take it as such.” Dunn interrupted him and looked at Daly. “Have you examined Welch’s and Naya’s bodies?”

“The corpses can tell us a lot more than you can imagine. It’s such a pity that Welch and Naya had indeed committed suicide. So, the force that drove them to it is to be feared. Not a single trace was left behind.” Daly stood up and pointed at the candle. “I need some rest.”

The cobalt blue glow vanished, and the house was instantly inundated with a blurry shade of crimson.

...

“Congratulations. You can return home now. But do remember, do not reveal this incident to your loved ones. You have to promise this.” Dunn said as he led Klein to the door.

Surprised, Klein asked, “Is there no need to examine the curses or the trails left behind by the evil spirits?”

“Daly didn’t mention anything about it, so there’s no need for it,” Dunn answered simply.

Klein calmed down. As the thought of his previous worries came to mind, he asked hurriedly, “How can I be sure that I will be free from trouble from now on?”

“No worries.” Dunn twitched his lips and said, “Based on statistics of similar incidents in the past, eighty percent of the survivors of the incident do not experience any horrifying aftereffects. Yeah... This is based on what I know... roughly... more or less...”

“Then... there’s still one fifth of those poor souls...” Klein did not dare to try his luck.

“Then you can consider joining us as a civilian staff. This way, even if there are any precursors, we can discover it in time,” Dunn said casually as he approached the carriage. “Or simply become a Beyonder. After all, we are not nannies. We can’t babysit you all day long and even watch what you do with women.”

“Can I?” Klein questioned the statement.

Of course, he did not expect much. After all, how was it even possible to be a part of the Nighthawks so easily and obtain the power of the Beyonders?

That was the power of the Beyonders!

Dunn paused, and turned his head sideways to look at him.

“It’s not that you can’t... It depends...”

What? The transition in his words shocked Klein. Klein stared blankly beside the carriage before answering, “Really?”

Who are you kidding? Is it so easy to become a Beyonder?

Dunn laughed lightly; his gray eyes were hidden in the shadow of the carriage.

“You don’t believe me, huh? Actually, when you become a Nighthawk you lose a lot. For instance, freedom.

“Even if we don’t talk about this now, there is another issue. Firstly, you are not a member of the clergy, nor a devotee. You can’t pick whatever you want or choose the safest approach.”

“And secondly...” Dunn held onto the handle and hopped onto the carriage as he went on. “Among the cases that we—us, the Mandated Punishers, the Machinery Hivemind and other Judiciaries—have to deal with annually, a quarter of them were a result of Beyonders who lost control.”

A quarter... Beyonders who lost control... Klein was dumbfounded.

Just then, Dunn turned slightly. His gray eyes were deep. With no sign of a smile, he continued, “And among the quarter of cases, a large number of them are our teammates.”

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1. Veteran driver is an Internet slang phrase describing people who are very experienced in particular domains, especially sexually-related things such as posting pornographic resources.

A wave of tumultuous emotions rose up in Klein's heart after he heard Dunn. Instinctively, he uttered, "Why?"

The Beyonders have serious hidden dangers? So much so that the Church's internal Judiciary and the Beyonders, who dealt with bizarre phenomenon, are also prone to problems?

Dunn stepped into the carriage and sat back in his seat. His expression and tone remained the same.

"This is not something that you need to understand. Neither is it something you can understand, unless you become one of us."

Klein was struck dumb for a moment, after which he sat down and questioned in a tone that was half dubious and half-joking.

"If I don't come to understand, how is it possible for me to make a decision to join?"

And not joining would mean Klein could not understand. This would end in a deadlock...

Dunn Smith took out the pipe once again, placed it against his nose, and took a whiff.

"You probably misunderstood; a civilian staff member is also one of us."

"In other words, as long as I become one of your civilian staff members, I will be able to understand the relevant secrets, figure out the hidden dangers that plague Beyonders, and the dangers that may be encountered, as well as consider whether I want to become a Beyonder later?" Klein reorganized his thoughts and paraphrased what Dunn had shared.

Dunn smiled and said, "Yes, that is the case, except for one point. You cannot simply become a Beyonder just because you want to because every church will be equally strict in this aspect."

It would be odd if the churches were not strict... Klein lampooned silently, as he added with a more intense tone coupled with stronger body language, "What about civilian staff members? This should be quite strict as well, right?"

"There shouldn't be any problems if it's you," said Dunn with half-closed eyelids as he whiffed the pipe with partially relaxed countenance. However, he did not ignite it.

"Why?" Klein asked as he was once again grappled by doubt.

At the same time, he jested inwardly.

So my uniqueness and halo as a transmigrator are akin to the fireflies in the night, ever so bright and outstanding?

Dunn opened his half-closed eyelids, his silver-colored eyes reflecting the same tranquility as before.

"First, you managed to survive without our help in such a situation. Certain exceptional qualities are not present in others.

For instance, luck. Lucky people are often welcomed."

Seeing that Klein's expression had turned blank, Dunn smiled slightly.

"All right, just treat this as a humorous statement. Second, you're a graduate of the history department from Khoy University; this is something we urgently need. Although a believer of the Lord of the Storms, Leumi, perceives women in a way that is loathsome, his views regarding society, humanities, economics, and politics remain incisive. He said before that talents are key to maintaining a competitive advantage and positive development, a point that I very much agree with."

Noticing that Klein was slightly furrowing his eyebrows, Dunn casually explained, "You should be able to imagine that we often encounter documents and objects from the Fourth Epoch or earlier. Many

cults and heretics have tried to gain power from these things. Sometimes, they themselves can lead to strange and terrible things.

“Except for the Beyonders in special fields, most of us are not good with our studies, or have passed that age.” Having said that, Dunn Smith pointed to his own head, and the corner of his mouth turned up slightly as if he was mocking himself.

He then said, “Those dry, boring knowledge always puts us to sleep. Even the Sleepless can’t help it. In the past, we would cooperate with historians or archaeologists, but this posed the risk of exposing secrets, and mishaps might befall on these otherwise uninvolved professors and associate professors. Thus, the addition of a professional in our ranks is hard to refuse.”

Klein nodded lightly and accepted Dunn’s explanation. With his thoughts all over the place, he asked, “Then why don’t you directly, um, groom one?”

Dunn continued, “This brings me to the third point, which is also the final and most important point. You’ve already been through a similar ordeal, so inviting you doesn’t violate the confidentiality clause.

“With regard to developing others, I will bear the responsibility of exposure if it fails. Most of our team members, our civilian staff members, come from within the Church.”

After Klein finished listening silently, he asked curiously, “Why are you so strict about maintaining confidentiality? Wouldn’t spreading the news publicly to more people and increasing awareness lessen the chances of a similar mistake from happening again? The greatest fear stems from the fear of the unknown; we can make the unknown become known.”

“No, humanity’s stupidity is beyond your imagination. It actually leads to more people emulating these acts, creating more chaos and more severe incidents,” Dunn Smith shook his head and replied.

Klein acknowledged as he replied in enlightenment, “The only lesson that humans can learn from history is that humans do not gain any lessons from history, and they’re always repeating the same tragedies.”

“That famous quote from Emperor Roselle is indeed filled with much philosophical meaning,” agreed Dunn.

...Emperor Roselle said that? This transmigrator senior really did not give the ‘latecomers’ any chance to posture... Klein did not know how to follow up on Dunn’s words.

Dunn turned his head and gazed out of the horse carriage. The dim yellowish light of the street lamps intertwined to display the splendor of civilization.

“...There is a similar discourse within the judiciary of the major churches. This may be the main reason for the strict confidentiality and the prohibition of ordinary people from knowing.”

“What is it?” Klein asked as his interest was piqued, pleasured that he seemed to be spying on secrets.

Dunn turned his head; his facial muscles pulled themselves so slightly that it was hardly visible.

“Faith and fear bring troubles. More faith and more fear bring more troubles, until everything is destroyed.”

After he said that, Dunn signed, “Besides praying for the blessings and help from gods, humans can’t solve their real major problems.

“Faith and fear bring troubles. More faith and more fear bring more troubles...” Klein recited silently, but he could not fully understand it.

What followed next was the fear of uncertainty that came from the unknown. It was like the dark shadows formed by the street lights outside. In the darkness without light, it appeared as though there were pairs of callous-looking eyes and wide-opened mouths.

As the horse galloped vigorously and nimbly while the wheels of the horse carriage reeled on ahead with Iron Cross Street in sight, Dunn broke the silence suddenly and formally invited Klein.

"Would you like to join us as a civilian staff member?"

In Klein's mind, multiple thoughts surfaced, making him indecisive. He contemplated and asked, "Can I have some time to consider?"

Since this matter had serious implications, he could not hastily and recklessly make the decision.

"No problem, just give me a reply before Sunday," Dunn nodded and added. "Of course, remember to keep this a secret and don't disclose the information regarding Welch to anyone, including your brother and sister. Once this is violated, it'll not only bring them trouble, but you might also have to attend a special court." "Okay," Klein answered gravely.

The carriage was once again plunged into silence.

Seeing that they were nearing Iron Cross Street and that he was almost reaching home, Klein suddenly thought of a question. He hesitated for a few seconds before asking, "Mr Smith, what kind of salary and benefits do civilian staff get?" *This was a serious question...*

Taken aback momentarily, Dunn smiled instantly and answered, "There's no need for you to worry about this issue. Our funds are guaranteed by the Church and the police department. For newly registered civilian staff, the weekly salaries are placed at two pounds and ten soli. There is an additional ten soli as compensation for the risk and confidentiality. All of this will add up to a total of three pounds. This is hardly worse than a confirmed university lecturer.

"After which, your salary will gradually rise according to your experience and contributions.

"As for civilian staff members, the contract is generally five years. After five years, you can quit normally if you're no longer willing to stay. You only have to sign a lifetime confidentiality agreement and you're not allowed to leave Tingen until permission is given. If you want to move to another city, the first thing you must do is register with the local Nighthawk.

"By the way, there are no weekends and you can only work in shifts. At any point in time, there should be three civilian staffs on duty and if you wish to go to the South or Desi Bay for a vacation, you'll need to arrange it with your colleagues."

Just as Dunn finished speaking, the horse carriage pulled to a stop and the apartment building where Klein and his siblings resided in appeared on the side.

"I get it now," Klein turned around and walked down the horse carriage. He stopped at the side and asked, "By the way Mr. Smith, where do I find you after I've come to my decision?"

Dunn gave a deep and low throaty laugh before saying, "Go to the 'Hound Pub' at Besik Street and find their boss, Wright. Tell him that you want to hire a small mercenary squad for a mission." "Huh?" Klein asked confusedly.

"Our location is confidential too. Before you agree to become one of us, I can't tell you directly. Alright Mr. Klein Moretti, I wish you a good dream tonight as well," Dunn smiled as he said.

Klein took off his hat and saluted, watching as the pace of the departing horse carriage gradually sped up.

He took out his pocket watch.

“Click,” he pressed it open and saw that it was only a little past four in the morning. The street was filled with a relaxing, cool breeze. A dim yellowish light from the street lamps illuminated the surroundings.

Klein drew a deep breath and took in the deep silence of the night around him.

The busiest and noisiest district in the day could be so lifeless and quiet at night. This was in stark contrast to the silent observations and medium’s seance in Welch’s residence.

It was only then that Klein realized that the back of his linen shirt was unknowingly drenched in sweat, cold and clammy.

Phew, I finally got through the round with the medium...

Klein let out a foul breath. He slowly turned around and enjoyed the cool breeze and tranquility of the night while walking closer and closer to the apartment building's door.

He took out his keys, inserted the correct one in and turned it gently, allowing the crimson-mixed darkness to expand with the creaking sound of the opened door.

Walking on the staircase without a single person in sight and taking in the cold air, Klein had an inexplicable and amazing feeling. It felt like he had a few more hours than others. This caused him to hasten his pace.

In a similar state of mind, he opened the door to his room and before he even stepped inside, he saw a silhouette sitting silently in front of his desk. It had reddish black hair, bright brown eyes, and a delicate, pretty face. Undoubtedly, she was Melissa Moretti!

"Klein, where did you go?" Melissa asked curiously as she relaxed her eyebrows.

Without waiting for Klein's reply, she added, "Just now, I got up to go to the bathroom and realized you weren't home." It was as if she wanted to know everything clearly, from the causes and effects of the matter to the underlying logic.

With great experience at lying to his parents, Klein's brain took a spin before he gave a bitter smile and calmly replied, "I couldn't fall asleep again after I woke up. Instead of wasting time, I decided that I should train my body. So I went out to run a few rounds. Look at my sweat!"

He took off his jacket and half-turned his body, pointing to his back.

Melissa stood up, took a glance half-heartedly and deliberated for a few moments before saying, "Honestly speaking, Klein, you don't have to stress yourself out. I'm sure you can pass the interview to Tingen University. Even if you can't, er—I mean *if*— you can still find better ones."

I haven't even thought about the interview... Klein nodded his head and said, "I understand."

He did not mention the "offer" that he had gotten because he had not decided whether he wanted to join them or not.

Staring at Klein intensely, Melissa suddenly turned around and trotted into the interior of the house. She took out an object that resembled a tortoise. It consisted of items like gears, rusted iron, torsion springs and ordinary springs.

After quickly tightening the torsion spring, Melissa placed the object on the desk.

Ka! Ka! Ka!

Dum! Dum! Dum!

The "tortoise" moved and jumped with a rhythm that could pull anyone's attention.

"Whenever I feel irritated, I feel much better seeing it move. I've been doing this very often recently and it's very effective! Klein, give it a try!" invited Melissa as her eyes brightened.

Klein did not turn down his sister's goodwill. He approached the "tortoise" and waited for it to stop before laughing. He said, "Simplicity and regularity can indeed help relaxation."

Without waiting for Melissa's reply, Klein pointed to the "tortoise" and casually asked, "Did you make this yourself? When did you make this? Why wasn't I aware of it?"

"I made use of unwanted materials from school and picked up things from the streets to make this. It was only finished two days ago," Melissa said in her usual tone, the side of her lips upturned a few more degrees.

“That’s impressive,” Klein praised sincerely.

As a boy with poor skills in machine assembly, he encountered great difficulties even assembling a four-wheel toy car as a child.

With her chin slightly raised and her eyes slightly bent, Melissa calmly replied, “It was okay.”

“Being overly humble is a bad trait,” Klein smiled slightly and continued, “This is a tortoise, right?”

Instantly, the atmosphere in the room took a great plunge, leaving behind an air of graveness for a while. Then, Melissa faintly replied with a voice that seemed enigmatic like the crimson veil, “It’s a puppet.” *Puppet...*

Klein gave an awkward smile, and tried to forcefully explain, “The problem lies in the materials, they’re too rudimentary.”

Following that, he tried to change the topic and said, “Why would you go to the bathroom in the middle of the night? Isn’t there a toilet here? Don’t you always sleep till dawn?” Melissa was taken aback momentarily.

It was only after a few seconds, before she opened her mouth, prepared to explain.

At that moment, an intense sound of digestion sounded from her thoracoabdominal [1] area.

“I-I’ll go get some more sleep!”

Bang! She grabbed her tortoise-like “puppet”, trotted to the interior of the house, and closed the door to her room.

Last night’s dinner was too good, she ate too much and now her stomach is having trouble digesting it... Klein shook his head as he smiled, slowly walking towards his desk. He sat down soundlessly, silently pondering Dunn Smith’s invitation as the crimson red moon emerged from behind the dark clouds.

Being a Nighthawk civilian staff member had its apparent disadvantages.

With me being a transmigrator, “The Fool”—initiator of the mysterious Gathering—and the multiple secrets I have, it will be risky to be under the noses of the Church of Evernight’s team that specializes in dealing with matters regarding the Beyonders.

As long as I join Dunn Smith and his team, I would certainly aim to become a Beyonder. I could then cover up the benefits gained from the Gathering.

Yet, becoming a formal member would entail many restrictions on my freedom, like how a civilian staff has to report his leaving of Tingen. No longer would I be able to go wherever I want or do whatever I want. I would miss many opportunities.

The Nighthawks are a strict organization. Once a mission is given, I can only wait for the arrangements and accept orders. There is no room for rejection.

Beyonders have the risk of losing control.

...

Having all the disadvantages listed out one by one, Klein turned to considering the necessities and advantages:

Judging from the situation of the luck enhancement ritual, I’m not one of the eighty percent of lucky people. In the future, there is bound to be some bizarre event happening to me, increasing the dangers I face.

Only by becoming one of the Beyonders or by joining the Nighthawks can I be equipped with the ability to resist.

The wish to become a Beyonder cannot be solely reliant on the Gathering. The potion formula is not a major problem, but where can I find the corresponding materials? How am I to obtain and concoct them?

Not forgetting the nous of daily practice, I'm faced with serious obstacles! It is just not possible for me to consult Justice and The Hanged Man on every matter and exchange every object with them. This would not only hurt the image of The Fool and arouse their suspicions, but there will also be inadequate time to communicate on such trivial issues.

Similarly, I am unable to produce anything that can pique their interest.

Besides, more materials would more often than not leave behind the trail of my real identity. Then, "online disputes" would effectively be transformed into "offline conflicts," bringing about immense troubles.

By joining the Nighthawks, there would definitely be contact with the common knowledge of the world of mystery and relevant channels. This can sufficiently accumulate into a corresponding social circle and can be used as leverage. Only then can I initiate the Gathering and in turn gain the greatest benefits from Justice and The Hanged Man. In fact, the gains can feedback into reality, allowing me to obtain more resources and form a virtuous cycle.

Of course, I could also go to an organization that is suppressed by the various Churches such as the Psychology Alchemists mentioned by Dunn and join them.

Yet I'll also lose my freedom, and be in a constant state of fear and anxiety. However, more importantly, I have no idea where to look for them. Even if I manage to gain the corresponding information from The Hanged Man, such rash contact with them could endanger my life.

Becoming a civilian staff leaves opportunity for a buffer and exit.

The inferior recluse hides away in the wild; the superior, the crowd. Perhaps the identity as a Nighthawk can be a better cover.

In the future, when I become one of the top authorities of the tribunal, who would imagine that I am a heretic, the head of the secret organization who is working behind the scenes?

...

As the first rays of the morning sun shone, the crimson disappeared. Gazing at the golden light on the horizons of the sky, Klein made up his mind.

He would find Dunn Smith today and become part of the

Nighthawk's civilian staff!

At this moment, Melissa, who had gotten out of bed again, had pushed open the door to the room. She was surprised to see her brother stretching in an unglamorous manner. "You didn't sleep?"

"I was thinking through some things." Klein smiled, feeling relaxed.

Melissa thought for a moment and said, "Whenever I encounter problems, I'll list out both the pros and cons one by one and compare them. After that, I would be able to get a hint of what I should do next."

"That's a good habit. I did that too," Klein smiled and replied.

Melissa's countenance was relaxed, and she did not add more. Holding a yellowish sheet of paper and her toiletries, she headed to the bathroom.

Not in a hurry to leave after he finished his breakfast and his sister's departure, Klein took a good nap. Based on what he knew, nearly all the pubs were closed in the morning.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, he smoothed the pleats of his silk hat and handkerchief using a small brush. He also removed the dirt to reestablish the tidiness.

Thereafter, he wore a suit of formal clothing, just like he was going for an interview.

Besik Street was a little far, and Klein was afraid that he would miss the "working hours" of the Nighthawk. Therefore, he did not walk there, but instead waited for a public horse carriage at Iron Cross Street.

In the Loen Kingdom, public horse carriages were placed under two categories—without track and with track.

The former consisted of a carriage drawn by two horses and could sit approximately 20 people while taking into account the top of the carriage. Only a general route existed, without specific stations. It had flexible operations and could be hailed anywhere unless it was full.

The latter was operated by the Orbital Carriage Company. First, a rail-like service device was laid on the main street. The horses would move on the inner lane while the wheels ran on the tracks, making it easier and more labor-saving. This could thus pull a bigger double-decker carriage that sat nearly fifty passengers.

However, the only problem was that the route and stations were fixed, making many places inaccessible.

After ten minutes, the sound of the wheels hitting the tracks approached from a distance. A double-decker horse carriage stopped in front of the station at Iron Cross Street.

"To Besik Street," Klein said to the carriage driver.

"You have to transfer at Champagne Street but when you get there, it takes about ten minutes to walk to Besik Street," explained the carriage driver to Klein, with regards to the route.

"Let's go to Champagne Street then." Klein nodded in approval.

"It's more than four kilometers, four pence", said a young man with a fair and clean face, as he extended his hand.

He was a worker responsible for money collection.

"Okay." Klein fished out four copper coins from his pocket and handed it to the other party.

He walked up to the carriage and found that there were not many passengers. Even on the first floor, there were a few empty seats.

"I only have three pence on me now, so I can only walk when I go back..." Klein pressed his hat down and sat down firmly.

On this floor, the men and women were mostly well-dressed although there were a few clothed in their work clothes, leisurely reading newspapers. Almost no one spoke, and it was rather quiet.

Klein shut his eyes and recharged his strength, oblivious to the coming and going of passengers around him.

Station after station passed until he finally heard the few words "Champagne Street."

After alighting the horse carriage, he inquired along the way and soon reached Besik Street, where he saw the pub with the brownish-yellow hound logo.

Klein reached out his right hand and gave a forceful push. The heavy door gradually opened, inundating him with a wave of uproarious noises and an impetuous heat wave.

Although it was still afternoon, there were already many customers in the pub. Some were temporary workers, looking for opportunities here, waiting to be hired. Others were simply idling around, numbing themselves with alcohol.

The pub was dimly lit. In the center, there were two large iron cages with a third of its bottom sinking deep into the ground without any gaps.

People held wooden wine cups and surrounded it, sometimes discussing loudly while laughing, sometimes cursing loudly.

Giving a curious glance, Klein found two dogs caged inside. One was black and white, similar to the husky found on Earth. The other was wholly black, with shiny fur, making it look healthy and fierce.

“Do you want to bet? Doug has won eight games in a row!” said a little man wearing a brown beret, as he neared Klein and pointed to the black dog.

Bet? Taken aback at first, Klein regained his senses immediately.

“Dog-fighting?”

When he was at Khoy University, those aristocratic and wealthy students would always ask him contemptuously and curiously, if the boorish workers and unemployed hooligans enjoyed participating in boxing and gambling at the pubs.

Besides being able to gamble on boxing and card games, didn’t it also include cruel and bloody activities like cock-fighting, dogfighting, and others?

The short man smirked. “Mister, we’re civilized people. We don’t engage in such unglamorous activities.”

Having said that, he whispered, “Besides, laws were introduced to ban these things last year...”

“Then what are y’all betting on?” asked Klein curiously.

“The better hunter.” Just as the short man finished his sentence, a resounding cacophony sounded.

He turned his head, waved his hands excitedly, and said, “You can’t place a bet for this round as it has started, wait for the next one then.”

Upon hearing that, Klein tipped his toes, lifted his head, and looked as far as he could.

He saw two strong men each dragging a sack, coming to the side of the iron cage and opening the “prison door.” They then dumped the contents of the sack into the cage.

There were gray and disgusting animals!

Klein tried to identify them carefully before realizing that they were rats. Hundreds of rats!

As the iron cage was deep underground without any gaps, the rats moved in all directions but could not find a way out.

Right then, just as the door of the cage was closed, the chain of the two dogs were untied.

“Woof!” The black dog pounced ahead and killed a rat in one bite.

The black-and-white dog was dazed at first before it started playing excitedly with the rats.

The surrounding people either raised their wine cups and

intensified their gaze or shouted loudly, “Bite it! Kill it!”

“Doug, Doug!”

*Motherf**king rat-baiting with dogs* [2]... Klein regained his senses and the corner of his mouth twitched unceasingly.

The objective of the gamble is to determine which dog can catch more rats...

Perhaps, one can even bet on the specific number of rats caught...

No wonder there were people purchasing live rats at Iron Cross

Street...

That's really unique...

Klein shook his head, laughing as he backtracked, and circled along the edge of the alcoholic customers, and reached the front of the bar.

"New here?" said the bartender as he spared Klein a glance while wiping the cups. He continued, "One cup of rye beer is a penny. Enmat beer, costs two pence. Four pence for Southville beer, or do you want a cup of purely brewed malt Lanti?"

"I came here for Mr. Wright," said Klein directly and bluntly.

The bartender whistled and shouted to the side, "Old Man, someone is looking for you."

"Oh, who..." A vague voice sounded, and an intoxicated old man stood up from behind the bar.

He rubbed his eyes, shifted his gaze to Klein and asked, "Lad, were you looking for me?"

"Mr. Wright, I would like to hire a small mercenary squad for a mission," replied Klein, according to what Dunn had instructed.

"A small mercenary squad? Are you living in an adventure story? This hasn't been around for a long time!" the bartender interrupted and smiled.

Wright went silent for a few seconds before saying, "Who told you about this place?"

"Dunn. Dunn Smith," replied Klein in all honesty.

Instantly, Wright broke out in a chuckle and replied, "I see. Actually, the small mercenary squad still exists. It's just in another form, with a more contemporary name. You can find it on the second floor of No. 36 Zouteland Street."

"Thank you," thanked Klein sincerely before he turned and squeezed out of the pub.

Before he went out of the pub, the alcoholic customers who surrounded him suddenly quieted down, as they murmured, "Doug was actually defeated..."

"Defeated..."

Klein smiled and shook his head. Then he left quickly and found his way to the nearby Zoeterland Street after asking around.

"30, 32, 34... Here," he counted the house numbers and walked into the stairwell.

Going around the corner and slowly climbing up the stairs, he saw the vertical sign with the current name of the so-called small mercenary squad.

"Blackthorn Security Company."

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1. Areas relating or affecting the thorax and abdomen.
2. Note, this is not an invention of the author, but anactual legal blood sport known as rat-baiting back in the Victorian era.

CHAPTER 17: SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

"Blackthorn Security Company."

Upon seeing the signboard, Klein felt surprised yet found it reasonable.

Man... what do I say about this... He shook his head and laughed before walking up the steps and knocking gently on the halfclosed door with his right hand.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The sound echoed slowly but rhythmically, but there was no response; only a faint sputtering sound could be heard.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Klein repeated, only to be met with the same outcome.

He switched to pushing the door, making the gap larger as he stared inside—a classic sofa which might have been for serving guests, a soft fabric armchair, and a burly wood coffee table. There was a girl with brown hair behind a table right across with her head drooped.

Even though "Security Company" is just a guise, isn't this just... just too "unprofessional?" How long has this place been out of business? Right, you guys don't need any business... Klein drew closer as he complained silently and knocked on the table just beside the girl's ear.

Knock! Knock!

The brown-haired girl sat up immediately and swiftly took the newspaper in front of her, covering her face.

Tingen City Honest Paper... Nice name... Klein silently read the title of the page facing him.

"The steam train service 'Soaring Express' that directly reaches Constant City is starting operations today... Oh come on, when will there be one that goes straight to Brindisi Bay. I really don't want to take the ship there again, it's too awful, really awful... Hey, who are you?" The girl with brown hair read pretentiously and gave her opinion. As she spoke, she lowered the newspaper and revealed her bright forehead and light-brown eyes, looking at Klein with a fawning and startled look.

"Hello, I am Klein Moretti, and I am here at the invitation of Dunn Smith," Klein said as he took down his hat to his chest and bowed slightly.

The brown-haired girl looked to be in her early twenties. She wore a light green, Loen-styled dress. She was accentuated by the beautiful laces on her sleeves, collar, and chest.

"The Captain... alright, wait here for a moment. I'll go get him." The girl scurried up and went into the room beside her.

She didn't even serve a cup of water or anything... The level of service awareness is worrying... Klein smiled faintly as he waited at his spot.

After two to three minutes, the brown-haired girl opened the door and came out. She said with a sweet smile, "Mr. Moretti, please follow me. The Captain is on watch at the 'Chanis Gate' and is unable to leave at the moment."

"Okay." Klein quickly followed behind. In his mind, he pondered to himself.

Chanis Gate, what could that be?

Going through the partition, the first thing he saw was a small corridor, with only three offices on each side.

Some of these offices were locked tight, while some were opened, revealing someone on the inside who typed non-stop on a heavy mechanical typewriter.

At a glance, Klein noticed a familiar figure: the young officer that had investigated his apartment, the one with the black hair, green eyes, and romantic vibe of a poet.

He was not in official wear; his white collared shirt was not tucked in, making for quite an unruly appearance.

Perhaps he really is a poet... Klein nodded in greeting and was greeted with a smile.

The brown-haired girl pushed opened the left office door at the end of the room and pointed inside, chirping, "We still have to go down a few levels."

This office had no furniture in place, only a grayish-white stone staircase that extended downwards.

The two sides of the stairs were lit up by gas lamps. The stable glow dispelled the darkness and gave a sense of harmony.

The brown-haired girl walked in front, staring at her feet while walking carefully.

"Although I walk here often, I am still constantly afraid of falling down, tumbling down like a barrel. You don't know, Leonard did such a folly. On the first day of becoming a 'Sleepless'—the first day where he had not mastered his new powers—he tried to rush down the flight of stairs. And-and he became a cartwheel. Haha, it was hilarious if you think about it. Oh yes, it was the guy that greeted you just now. This was about three years ago. Speaking of which, I have been with the Nighthawks for five years; I was only seventeen when I joined..."

The girl watched her steps as she spoke. Suddenly, she smacked her forehead and said, "I forgot to introduce myself! I'm Rozanne. My father was a member of the Nighthawks, who sacrificed himself in an accident five years ago. I suppose we are colleagues from now on— Err, yeah 'colleague' is the right word... we are not teammates since we are not Beyonders."

"I hope to have the honor, but still it depends on what Mr. Smith has to say," Klein said as he sized up the enclosed surroundings. He felt that they were going underground—dampness seeped out from the stone walls, dispelling the summer heat.

"Don't worry, the fact that you came so far means the Captain has agreed. I've always been a little afraid of him, even though he is amiable, a fatherly figure. I don't know why but I'm still afraid." Rozanne spoke as though there was a piece of sweet in her throat.

Klein answered humorously, "Isn't being afraid of a father normal?"

"True." Rozanne said as she held the wall around the bend.

As they spoke, the two finished walking down the stairs and reached a stone-paved floor.

It was a long aisle; both sides of the walls were mounted with gas lamps surrounded by metal gratings. Klein and Rozanne's shadows were elongated under the illumination.

Klein keenly noticed that there was a "Dark Sacred Emblem" every few meters—the symbol of the Evernight Goddess. A deep black background dotted with sparkling embellishments, as they clustered precisely half the crimson moon.

These emblems did not seem special, but walking between them gave Klein a sense of serenity. Rozanne also stopped talking, unlike her previous talkative state.

Before long, an intersection appeared up front. Rozanne briefly introduced,

“The path to the left will lead to the Saint Selena Cathedral; to the right are the armory, storeroom, and archives. And straight ahead is the Chanis Gate.”

Saint Selena Cathedral? Then, Zouteland Street is just behind Red Moonlight Street? Klein was a little stunned.

Saint Selena Cathedral of Red Moonlight Street was the headquarters of the Church of Evernight in Tingen, a sacred ground where local followers yearned to visit. Along with “Holy Numerics Cathedral” of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in the suburbs, and the “River and Sea Cathedral” of the Church of Storms in North Tingen, they sustained the religious circles in Tingen City and its affiliated towns and villages.

Aware that his status made it unsuitable for him to ask more, Klein only listened silently.

They passed the intersection and moved straight ahead. In less than a minute, a black iron split gate carved with seven sacred emblems was seen.

It stood there, heavy, cold and domineering, like a giant guarding in the darkness.

“Chanis Gate.” Rozanne reminded him and pointed at the room beside them, saying, “Captain is inside.

Go on in by yourself.” “Alright, thank you.” Klein replied politely.

The room Rozanne was referring to was just in front of “Chanis Gate.” The windows were opened, revealing the lit room inside. Klein took a deep breath to calm himself.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

“Come in.” He heard Dunn Smith’s deep and amiable voice.

Klein opened the unlatched door gently. There was only a table and four chairs inside. Dunn Smith with his high hairline, who was wearing the black coat from the previous night plus a gold watch chain around his chest, was reading the newspaper leisurely.

“Come and have a seat. Have you decided? Are you certain you want to join us?” Dunn smiled and asked as he put down the newspaper.

Klein removed his hat and bowed, then he sat beside the table and said, “Yes, I am certain.”

“Then take a look at this deed, heh heh. People like to call it a contract now.” Dunn pulled out the table drawer and took out two contract copies.

There were not many clauses, and most of them had been mentioned by Dunn Smith. The emphasis was on the confidential clause. Violators were tried in the tribunal courts of the Church of Evernight instead of the kingdom’s courts. It was akin to how soldiers and officers were sent to court martial for trials.

A five year contract... Two pounds and ten soli for weekly wages, ten soli as compensation for the risk and confidentiality... Klein read through it and answered resolutely, “I’ve no problem with

it.”

“Then sign it,” Dunn said as he pointed to the dark red fountain pen and ink.

Klein used a piece of waste paper to try out the pen before drawing a breath. He signed on both contracts with his name: Klein Moretti.

As he did not have a stamp yet, he could only use his thumbprint.

Dunn received the contract, took out a stamp from the drawer, and stamped on the end of the contract and a few key parts.

With that done, he stood up and returned a contract with one hand, and reached for Klein with the other saying, “Welcome, from now on, you are one of us, and please note that the contract is confidential as well.”

Klein stood up as well. He received the contract, shook his hand, and said, “So, I shall be addressing you as Captain?”

“Yes.” Dunn’s grayish eyes seemed especially deep in the dim surroundings.

After shaking hands, they sat down. Klein glanced at the stamp on the contract, it read: “Nighthawk team, Tingen City, Awwa County, Loen Kingdom.”

“I can’t believe you guys would use the name ‘Blackthorn Security Company’ as a disguise,” he laughed and said.

“Actually, we have other signboards.” Dunn pulled out a piece of paper from the drawer.

It was stamped with the stamps of the city government and the police department. The contents were as follows: “Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department, Awwa County Police, Loen Kingdom.”

“The first four units are the regular police responsible for general security, like the VIP Protection Unit and Key Installations Protection Unit. And from unit five onwards are the ones dealing with supernatural incidents in each city. Our unit is responsible for incidents related to the followers of Evernight Goddess in Tingen. If there are different types of followers, then we divide the area accordingly; we are mainly in charge of places like the north, west and the Golden Indus region.”

Dunn briefly introduced, “Unit Six of the Mandated Punisher squad under the Church of Storms is in charge of the pier region, the east, and the south. The university area and the suburbs are under Unit Five, which is the Machinery Hivemind squad in Tingen.”

“Right.” Klein had no questions about it. He then laughed. “What happens if someone really comes here due to the ‘Blackthorn Security Company’ signboard and requests for our services?”

“We’ll take those requests; why shouldn’t we? As long as it doesn’t affect our daily operations,” Dunn said slowly and humorously. “Any earnings would be considered additional bonuses, so our members are quite willing to take those jobs. Anyway, the market for trivial and troublesome matters such as finding dogs and cats have been monopolized by private

detectives.”

“So how many people are there in this Nighthawks team?” Klein asked since they were on this topic.

“There aren’t many supernatural incidents, so there are even fewer Beyonders. There are only six formal members of the Nighthawks in the entire Tingen City, including me. Heh heh, as for civilian staff, there are six including you.”

Klein nodded his head, and eventually asked the question that he was most concerned about, “So, Captain, what do you mean

by Beyonders losing control? Why does it happen?”

CHAPTER 18: ORIGIN AND CAUSE

Upon hearing Klein's question, Dunn looked out of the window toward the corridor that led to Chanis Gate. He took out his pipe, stuffed it with some tobacco and mint leaves, and held it to his nose. He took a deep whiff as his voice turned reflective and drifting.

"Only at home can I enjoy the beautiful flavors of tobacco mixed with mint leaves without any worries... Klein, do you know about the creation myth?"

"Of course, when I received primary education during Sunday school, we learned to read using The Revelation of Evernight. Among them, the Book of Wisdom and the Letters from the Saints mentioned the myth of creation." Klein attempted to recall via the memory fragments of the original Klein. He slowed down his tempo and said, "The Creator awoke from Chaos and shattered the darkness, creating the first ray of light. 'He' then fused 'Himself' completely into the universe and made up all of existence. 'His' body became the land and stars. One of 'His' eyes became the sun, while the other became the crimson moon. Some of 'His' blood rushed into the seas and rivers, nourishing and nurturing lives..."

Klein subconsciously paused when he said that. Partially, it was because the relevant memories were a blur and that the creation myth was very similar to the Chinese creation myth of Pangu.

The imaginations of people from different worlds shared something in common with their myths and legends!

Noticing that Klein was having 'trouble,' Dunn smiled and added, "His lungs turned into the elves; His heart turned into the giants; His liver turned into the treants; His brain turned into the dragons; His kidneys turned into the feathered serpents; His hair turned into the phoenixes; His ears turned into the demonic wolves; His mouth and teeth turned into the mutants, and His remaining bodily fluids turned into the sea monsters, of which the essence was Naga. His stomach, His small and large intestines, and the evil parts of His body turned into devils, evil spirits and various kinds of unknown maleficent existences. His spirit became the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Lord of the Storms, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom..."

"His wisdom gave birth to humanity. That was the first Epoch, the Chaos Epoch." Klein finished the last sentence for Dunn, but he found it funny and ridiculous.

As a keyboard folklorist, it was the first time he came into contact with a creation myth that was 'arranged' in such great detail. It was so detailed that almost every prominent race corresponded to a particular body part of the Creator.

It's like a children's song with children sitting in a row and eating fruit...

Furthermore, it was not only mentioned in the canon of the Evernight Goddess. The Churches of the Lord of Storms and God of Steam and Machinery also had similar descriptions. None of them alleviated themselves or devalued the other gods...

This either means that the creation myth is real or hints that the few Churches had undergone a long period of strife before compromising before the Fifth Epoch...

With this in mind, Klein suddenly had another question. He asked with a frown, "It feels problematic. Why are the Eternal Blazing Sun, Lord of Storms, and God of Knowledge and Wisdom born directly from the Creator's spirit, while the Goddess isn't?" In the Revelation of Evernight's prehistorical records, the Evernight Goddess had only awoken at the end of the Second Epoch. Together with the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and other gods, she blessed and helped humanity survive the Cataclysm. It was also known as the Third Epoch, the Cataclysm Epoch.

It was during that time that Earth Mother and the God of Combat appeared as well. As for the God of Steam and Machinery, whose original name was the God of Craftsmanship, He was born only in the Fourth Epoch.

In that sense, the standing among the gods seemed self-evident.

The ones who were more ancient were more orthodox. It was extremely clear!

This also troubled the believers of the Evernight Goddess.

Dunn Smith held his pipe with another hand and instead of answering, he returned with a question, “Repeat the Goddess’s

full title.”

Klein immediately felt like he had stabbed himself with a knife. He racked his brains and tried his best to recall.

“The Evernight Goddess stands higher than the cosmos and more eternal than eternity. She is also the Lady of Crimson, the Mother of Concealment, the Empress of Misfortune and Horror, Mistress of Repose and Silence.”

Thankfully, Klein’s mother was a devout believer of the Evernight Goddess. When she was still alive, she would recite this every evening at dinner. Even though the memories of the original Klein had fragmented, not all was lost.

“What does the Lady of Crimson symbolize?” Dunn asked with a guiding tone.

“The red moon.” The moment Klein answered, he immediately understood.

“Then which part of the Creator did the red moon come from?” asked Dunn with a smile.

“A single eye!” Klein and Dunn smiled at each other.

This was no way less impressive than the Lord of Storms who was formed from a third of the Creator’s spirit!

As for the Churches of Earth Mother and the God of Combat, they likely had similar explanations. However, the God of Steam and Machinery had been born too late to find a reason; thus, their church had been weak in the past thousand plus years. It was only with the invention of the steam engine that they seized the opportunity to truly be on par with the other gods.

Dunn stroked his pipe gently.

“Humanity was born out of the wisdom of the Creator, so we have clever and extraordinary brains, but lack other magical powers. However, from the creation myth, we can form a simple but clear conclusion. Everything stems from the same origin.”

“Stems from the same origin...” Klein repeated the last few words.

“According to this conclusion, humans who are protected by the gods were able to resist the giants, devils, and the mutants. Gradually, they figured out means to obtain the power of the Beyonders. That is by using the corresponding parts of the evil spirits, dragons, monsters, magical trees, flowers, or crystals and combining them with other materials to form potions. By consuming and absorbing the potion, one will gain different powers. This is common knowledge among mysticism studies.”

Dunn did not elaborate in detail and only gave a brief introduction. “In this process, our ancestors relied on painful lessons to discover that if they were to consume high-grade or extraordinary potions, it would easily lead to tragic consequences. There are three possible outcomes.” “Which three?” pressed Klein curiously.

“First, mental death and the complete breakdown of a body. Every piece of flesh would become a terrifying monster. Second, their personality will be changed by the powers contained in the potion. They will turn cold, sensitive, irascible, cruel, and indifferent. Third, well...” Dunn put down his pipe and picked up a porcelain cup and took a sip. “Fermo coffee from the Paz River Valley is bitter, but very fragrant. It leaves a splendid aftertaste. Do you want one?”

“I prefer coffee from the Feynapotter plateau. Of course, I have only drank it a few times at Welch’s place.” Klein politely declined. “What’s the third outcome?”

“Mental disorder. Turning crazy on the spot, becoming more devilish than the devil. This is what it means by losing control.”

Dunn emphasized the words ‘losing control.’

Without waiting for Klein to say a word, he put down his coffee cup and continued, “After a long period of experimentation and exploration, together with the birth of the Blasphemy Slate, humans have finally perfected the potion system. We formed a tiered system that chains into stable progression paths known as Sequences. The lower the number in a Sequence, the higher the grade of a potion. At this point, the seven major churches each control at least one complete Sequence. Besides, there are also incomplete ‘paths’ that they have gathered over the past hundreds or thousand years.”

“Blasphemy Slate?” Klein sharply noticed the term.

At the Gathering, The Hanged Man had also mentioned it!

According to The Hanged Man, the Blasphemy Slate was the most critical factor of a potion’s system formation and completion!

That seemed to contradict what Dunn had just said.

“Those were things created by some evil gods. As for which era it appeared, what it contains or what’s so special about it, I am unsure as well. If you discover any clues, you have to immediately report it to me. It deserves the highest level of response,” said Dunn vaguely. “I mentioned one of the types of losing control. I’ll now tell you the remaining four.”

“Alright.” Klein pushed the question of the Blasphemy Slate to the back of his mind and listened attentively.

“Although humans have clever minds, they lack extraordinary powers, it is not absolute. There are always a few lucky ones; perhaps I should call them the unlucky ones. They are born with relatively higher perception. Well, it also means the ability to sense spirits. They can hear voices that others cannot hear and see things that others cannot see. They have partial

characteristics of Beyonders.”

While Dunn spoke, he looked at the empty air around him and watched Klein shudder in fear. “In other words, if they are half a Sequence 9 Beyonder and have fixed characteristics. Oh, Sequence 9 is the lowest grade in the ‘chain...’ In short, they can only choose a corresponding, fixed Sequence pathway. If they consume other potions, the effects might range from mental disorders to a loss of control, or even worse, death.” “Got it.” Klein nodded slowly.

“The third kind is similar to the second kind. Once you choose a Sequence chain, you will be forced to go down that path. There will be no room for regret. If you were to consume potions from the corresponding Sequence of other ‘paths,’ there will be a high probability you will get mixed, unusual and warped powers. But it is almost certain that you would be in a semi-deranged state; sensitive and irascible, cruel and bloodthirsty, and silent and melancholic.

“And there is only one such opportunity. After that, regardless if you consume the potions from the original path or potions in the present Sequence, the only result is a loss of control. The outcome could

then be mental death; alternatively, the body breaks down into monsters or even transforms into an evil spirit." As Dunn spoke, he lifted his coffee cup to take a sip.

Klein, who turned alarmed and fearful after hearing this, fell silent for a few seconds before asking, "What about the fourth kind?"

"The fourth kind, heh heh. That is the most common problem. When we consume potions to gain powers that originally belong to extraordinary beings, we undergo an unnatural transformation. Therefore, we would more or less be affected by the remnant spiritual powers. While perhaps the symptoms might not manifest and are undetectable to others, it will definitely lurk in one's mind. If one rushes to consume the corresponding potion ranked higher in the Sequence before fully grasping the extraordinary powers the potion brings and eliminating the subtle traces, the madness will accumulate, increasing the chances of losing control..." Dunn suddenly fell silent.

After a short pause, he said with a sigh, "As per the internal rules of us Nighthawks, even if a teammate were to make a great contribution, they must have consumed the last potion three years ago and be examined before they can be promoted. Even so, there are still many who lose control every year."

How terrifying... Klein drew a gasp as he asked, "Then what about the final kind?"

There was no trace of a smile despite Dunn's curved lips.

"The fifth kind is the most common reason for a loss of control. For Beyonders, one's spiritual perception would be enhanced more or less. The smaller the number in the Sequence, the more enhanced their perception. Therefore, they would hear what others cannot hear, see what others cannot see, and encounter things others would not encounter. They are constantly met with mysterious enticement and illusionary bewitchment. Once they are overstimulated or have greedy desires, they will slowly go down the path of losing control."

As he spoke, Dunn looked straight at Klein, his gray pupils reflecting Klein's figure.

His tone turned bleak as he said, "The founder of the Nighthawks, Archbishop Chanis, once said, 'We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness.'"

“We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against dangers and madness.”

The corridor outside the window was sealed, its walls ice-cold. The room was illuminated with bright yellow lights. Dunn Smith’s delivery echoed, sending blow after blow to Klein’s heart. It left him temporarily at a loss for words.

Dunn shook his head and smiled when he saw Klein silent.

“Are you very disappointed? Beyonders are not like what you imagine them to be. We are always treading alongside danger.”

“There is always a price to any gain.” Klein recovered from his shock as he answered with a quivering voice.

It was true that he never imagined that the halo, abnormality, and the inordinary aspects of a Beyonder would have such hidden threats. Perhaps it was only because he was hearing a description without witnessing it first hand and that he had been sucked into the vortex with a peculiar incident already befalling him. Klein soon brought his fear, uneasiness, worry, and apprehension under control.

Of course, the thought of shrinking back was inevitable; it lingered around and refused to leave.

“Not bad. Very mature and rational...” Dunn finished the last mouthful of coffee and added, “Also, Beyonders are not as powerful as you imagine them to be, especially a low-Sequence Beyonder. Heh, why would we use 1 to represent the highest grade and 9 the lowest? Isn’t this against intuition and logic? The low Sequence we often mention refers to a low grade or a high number. They are the starting point of the Sequence chain.

“Alright, where was I? Yes, Beyonders are not as powerful as you imagine. A low-Sequence Beyonder’s power is no match for guns, much less cannons. They are just more fascinating and indefensible than firearms. If you have a chance to become a Beyonder in the future, you must consider what I said today carefully. Do not make a rash decision.” Klein gave a self-deprecating smile.

“I don’t even know when I will have the chance.”

He felt that he would not miss the opportunity if it presented itself to him. Consuming the wrong potion or a higher-ranked potion in the Sequence could be mostly avoided. The major potential danger was the subtle influences the potions had and what he experienced from having heightened auditory and visual perceptions.

For the former, he could draw on the experiences from generations of people before him. As long as he was not in a rush to advance himself and patiently grasped control over his powers, the chances of losing control were relatively low. Furthermore, he still had to resolve the potential problem that he currently faced. He had to understand the essence of mysticism and seek a way to transmigrate back. These were the underlying reasons for taking the first step. He did not aim for higher Sequence spots. If it was easy to lose control, he could just forget about advancement, stay in his original Sequence, and rely on knowledge to plan a way ‘home.’

It was needless to elaborate on the potential risks. Back when Klein held the luck enhancement ritual, he was nearly driven crazy. The murmurings that nearly blew up his head were still fresh in his mind. They were not unavoidable by not becoming a Beyonder; therefore, it was better to gain power that allowed him to defend himself.

With this in mind, Klein felt that the pros clearly outweighed the cons. It made his thoughts of withdrawal almost disappear.

Dunn picked up his pipe again as his gray eyes carried a smiling trace to them.

“I cannot give you an accurate answer on this. To become a Beyonder, firstly, you must make enough contributions. Perhaps tomorrow or the day after, you would be able to interpret critical ancient documents. Maybe you would be able to give us valuable ideas for one of our cases? Secondly, it depends on the arrangements of the higher-ups. No one can be sure.

“Alright, I believe you should know quite a bit about Beyonders now. In the future, do not make a rash decision. Now, I’ll introduce you to our Nighthawks team’s civilian jobs.”

He stood up and walked to the door. He pointed in the opposite direction of Chanis Gate and said, “We have an accountant and someone else who is in charge of procuring necessities and collecting supplies handed out by the Church and the police department while standing in as a carriage driver. They are professionals and do not need to take shifts, so they can rest on weekends. The other three civilian staff are Rozanne, Bredt, and Old Neil. Their jobs include: attending to visitors, cleaning the rooms, and writing case files and inventory registration lists. They also guard the armory, storeroom, and the archives, strictly enforcing the registration should someone wish to enter, take out or return an item. Each of them has one day off a week, other than Sundays. They negotiate among themselves on the arrangement of night shifts and rest days.”

“So is my job scope the same as Rozanne and the rest?” Klein swept away his thoughts about Beyonders and tried to clarify his job responsibilities.

“No, there’s no need. You are a professional,” said Dunn with a smile. “You currently have two tasks.

First, every morning or afternoon, go take a stroll outside. Focus on the various streets that lead from

Welch’s place to yours.” “What?” Klein was dumbfounded.

What kind of job is this?

Is that very professional?

Dunn inserted his hands into the pockets of his black trench coat and said, “After you confirm that you have lost your memories, we will close the case on Welch and Naya. Similarly, that diary of the Antigonus family has vanished completely. We suspect that you brought it with you. You might have hidden it on your way home which might be why we did not find any clues at your place. This is also likely the reason why you were not there and chose to commit suicide at home.

“Although you were mysteriously influenced and have forgotten this piece of memory, the human spirit and brain is very fascinating, so there might be residual traces. Daly might not be able to obtain them through her means as a medium, but it does not mean that they do not exist. Perhaps you will feel a sense of déjà vu at a familiar and critical spot. “That is what we wish to obtain.”

“Got it.” Klein was enlightened.

The Nighthawks’ deduction of the diary’s location was indeed reasonable.

He was the only one alive among the people involved. Only he had the time and motive to take the diary away and hide it on his way back!

“If you can find the diary this way, you will likely make enough of a contribution to become a Beyonder,” encouraged Dunn, indirectly revealing the importance of the diary.

“I hope.” Klein nodded.

Dunn changed the subject again.

“Secondly, you get a day off every week. You can decide which day it is for now. When you are not outside, go to our armory and read the literature and canon books. This is a job for a professional

historian. When you finish them all, you will have to begin taking shifts with Old Neil and the rest."

"Alright, no problem." Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

This is not something too difficult...

At this moment, Dunn turned his body halfway and pointed to the black outward-swinging gates that was engraved with seven sacred emblems.

"This is Chanis Gate. It is named after the creator of the modern Nighthawks system, Archbishop Chanis. There is one under the central cathedral of every major city.

"It is guarded by formal Nighthawk members on rotation. Inside, there are at least two 'Keepers' who are sent by the Church, as well as countless traps. You must not approach it under any circumstances; otherwise, misfortune will befall you." "That sounds scary," Klein expressed his feelings.

"The area inside is divided into a few zones. Stored within are certain potion formulas for certain Sequences and other magical materials. It is also used to temporarily hold heretics, mutants, cultists, and members of secret organizations. Heh heh, they will eventually be sent to the Holy Cathedral," introduced Dunn in passing.

Holy Cathedral? The headquarters of the Church of Evernight located in the Winter County to the north of the kingdom, Cathedral of Serenity? Klein nodded slightly as though he was pondering over the matter.

"In addition, there are all sorts of classified documents and records inside. When you gain a higher clearance, you might have a chance of reading them." Dunn hesitated for a moment before adding, "Behind the Chanis Gate, there are also Sealed Artifacts in the basement."

"Sealed Artifacts?" Klein ruminated on the terms.

It sounded like a specialized term.

"Some of the extraordinary items we gather and retrieve are just too important and magical. If they fall into the wrong hands, it would cause immense destruction. Therefore, we have to keep it strictly confidential and watch them carefully. Even we can only use it under special circumstances. Besides..." With that said, Dunn paused for a moment before continuing, "Besides, there are some things inside that are very special. They had certain 'living' characteristics which can entice the Keepers. It would influence the surroundings, attempt escape, and cause catastrophic outcomes. They have to be strictly controlled." "How fascinating," commented Klein wistfully.

"The Nighthawks headquarters have categorized these Sealed Artifacts into four grades. Grade 0 represents Extremely Dangerous. They are of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. They are not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied. They can only be sealed in the basement of the Holy Cathedral," described Dunn in detail. "Grade 1 is Highly Dangerous. They can be used in limited ways. Their security clearance is limited to diocesan bishops or Nighthawks deacons and above. The central cathedral of diocese headquarters like Backlund can store one to two artifacts. The rest will be handed over to the Holy Cathedral.

"Grade 2 is Dangerous. They can be used with care and moderation. The security clearance requires one to be a bishop or a Nighthawks team's captain and above. The central cathedrals in the various cities can store three to five artifacts. The rest will be turned into the Holy Cathedral or the diocese headquarters. Grade 3 is Considerably Dangerous. They have to be used carefully. It can only be requested for operations that require three or more people.. The security clearance requires one to be a formal member of the Nighthawks."

"In the future, you will see the corresponding documents. Through the numbers, you can understand what they represent. For instance, 2-125 means that it is a Dangerous grade Sealed Artifact No. 125."

As Dunn went on, he suddenly turned around and returned to his room. He pulled out a piece of paper from the bottom of the drawer.

“By the way, take a look at this. Three years ago, a newly appointed archbishop lost control. For some unknown reason, he stormed through the various levels of protection and vanished mysteriously with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. Memorize this photo. If you discover him, do not alert or disturb him. Return to report it immediately or the chance of you dying in the line of duty is a thousand percent.”

“What?” Klein received the piece of paper. There was no title on it, just a black and white photo with a few lines of words.

“Ince Zangwill. Male. Forty years old. Former archbishop. A Gatekeeper who failed in his promotion and was enticed by the devil and was corrupted. He escaped with Sealed Artifact 0-08. Particular traits are...”

The picture depicted Ince Zangwill as wearing an all-black clergyman robe with buttons on both sides and a soft cap. His hair was dark blonde and his pupils were so blue that it was nearly black. He had a high nose and his lips were tightly pursed. His facial features were like a classic sculpture without any wrinkles. The most striking characteristic was that he was blind in one eye.

“The description of the corrupted is so detailed but the only thing about the Sealed Artifact is its codename...” Klein honestly offered his first impression.

“That’s why it is at the highest security clearance. The search for Sealed Artifacts No. 0-08 is only described verbally and never written in words. Even so, the description will be little,” said Dunn with a sigh. “0-08 appears to be a common quill, but it does not need ink to write. That’s all.”

Dunn did not dive deeper into the topic. He tugged at the golden chain on his black trench coat and took out a gorgeous pocket watch of the same color. He clicked it open and took a glance before pointing outside.

“I’ve told you all you need to know. Go to the armory to find Old Neil. Get him to arrange the documents that you need to read. He is no ordinary civilian clerk. He was once a formal member, but due to his advanced age, he failed to be promoted. His health is ailing, so it’s no longer suitable for him to handle cases. Furthermore, he does not wish to become an internal Keeper or rest at home. All he wishes is to be accompanied by documents and records.”

"Okay." Klein bowed slightly as he wore his short top hat again. However, his mind was preoccupied with how Sealed Artifact 0-08 looked.

It appears to be just your everyday quill?

It writes without ink?

Then, what is its actual use? What makes it classified at the highest level of confidentiality that it's deemed Extremely Dangerous?

Can it be a pen that kills anyone whose name is written?

No, that would be way too heaven-defying. Ince Zangwill wouldn't need to escape and hide away if that were the case...

Just as Klein turned around to leave, Dunn suddenly shouted out to him.

"Hold on. I forgot something."

"What?" Klein turned his head; his eyes puzzled.

Dunn put back his pocket watch and said with a smile, "Later, remember to visit the accountant, Mrs. Orianna, and get an advance payment of four weeks—a total of twelve pounds. After that, you'll earn half your salary every week until the difference is covered."

"That's too much. There's no need for this, the amount should be reduced," said Klein subconsciously.

He had no objection towards an advanced payment. After all, he didn't even have the money needed to pay for the public horse carriage trip home. However, to receive twelve pounds at once left him a little afraid.

"No, it's necessary," said Dun as he shook his head and smiled. "Think about it. Do you still wish to continue living in your present apartment? One that needs you to share a bathroom with so many other tenants? Even if you aren't taking yourself into consideration, think about the lady. Besides..."

He paused when he saw Klein nod in agreement. He smiled and sized up Klein's garbs and said with a meaningful intent, "Besides, you need a cane, and you should buy a new suit."

Klein was taken aback for a second before snapping back to reality. His face immediately burned with embarrassment since the suit he was wearing was cheap and of inferior quality.

Typically, a top hat was made of silk, costing five to six soli. A bow tie was three soli, a walking cane inlaid with silver was seven to eight soli, a shirt was three soli, while pants, a vest, and tuxedo were around seven pounds in total. Leather boots were nine to ten soli. As such, an entire suit cost more than eight pounds and seven soli. Of course, to be a presentable gentleman, one needed a watch chain, a pocket watch, and a wallet.

Back then, the original Klein and Benson scrimped and saved before managing to save up a pool of money. When they went to a clothing store to check the price, they ended up running off without even bothering to try haggling. They each bought a set at a bargain shop near Iron Cross Street for a total of less than two pounds.

It was also because of that incident that original Klein had a deep impression of the prices of clothes.

"O-Okay," Klein stammered a reply.

He was like the original Klein. He was someone who cared about his appearance.

Dunn took out the pocket watch again and clicked it open to take a glance at it.

"Perhaps you should find Mrs. Orianna first? I know you'll spend quite some time at Old Neil's while Mrs. Orianna will likely be returning home soon."

“Alright.” Klein was acutely aware of his state of poverty and did not object to it.

Dunn returned to the table’s side and pulled at a few hanging ropes as he said, “I’ll get Rozanne to bring you there.”

The ropes began their operation as the gears ground, producing a chime from a bell at the reception area of Blackthorn Security Company. When Rozanne heard it, she hurriedly stood up and carefully made her way down.

It did not take long before she appeared in front of Klein again.

Dunn said humorously, “I did not disturb your rest, right? Oh, bring Moretti to Mrs. Orianna.”

Rozanne secretly curled her lips as she answered ‘happily—’

“Alright, Captain.”

“Is that all?” At that moment, Klein blurted out in surprise.

To get his advance payment from finance, isn’t there a need to get an approval letter from the Captain? Shouldn’t you write something?

“So?” Dunn returned with a question.

“I mean— Don’t I need your signature to claim an advance payment from Mrs. Orianna?” Klein tried his best to use simple language.

“Oh, no. There’s no need. Rozanne is enough proof.” Dunn pointed at the brown-haired girl and gave a reply.

Captain, it seems there’s almost zero management of our finances... Klein resisted his urge to deliver a sarcastic comment before turning to leave the room with Rozanne.

At that moment, he heard Dunn shout out again.

“Hold on. There’s still another thing.”

Can we finish it all at once? Klein turned back with a smiling face.

“Yes?”

Dunn pressed at his temple and said, “When you meet Old Neil, remember to collect ten demon hunting bullets.”

“Me? Demon hunting bullets?” Klein returned in astonishment.

“Welch’s revolver is still with you, right? There’s no need for you to turn it in.” Dunn inserted a single hand into his pocket and said, “With the demon hunting bullets, if you were to face a paranormal danger, you will be able to protect yourself. Uh, it will give you some courage at the very least.”

There’s no need for you to add on the final sentence... Just as Klein was vexing over the problem, he answered without any

hesitation, “Alright. I’ll remember to do so!”

“This will require me to write a formal document. Wait a moment.” Dunn sat down and picked up the dark red fountain pen. He scribbled a ‘note,’ signed it, and stamped it.

“Thank you, Captain.” Klein received it sincerely.

He slowly walked back before turning around.

“Hold on.”

Dunn shouted one more time.

...Captain, you look to be in your thirties. Why do you have the symptoms of dementia? Klein squeezed out a smile and turned around to ask, “Anything else?”

“I forgot earlier that you are not trained in shooting, so getting demon hunting bullets would be useless. Let’s do this; collect thirty normal bullets every day. Take the opportunity when you are out to go to the street corner—the underground shooting range at No. 3 Zouteland Street. Most of it belongs to the police department, but there is one that is specially for us Nighthawks. Oh, right, you also need to get a badge from Old Neil. Otherwise, you won’t be able to enter the shooting range.” Dunn smacked his forehead and took back the note from Klein. He then added the information and stamped it with another seal.

“A good marksman is produced by expending bullets. Do not think lightly of it.” Dunn handed back Klein the modified note.

“Got it.” Klein, who was fearful of danger, yearned to visit the shooting range that very day.

He took two steps towards the exit before carefully turning around halfways. He deliberated before asking, “Captain, is there anything else?”

“No.” Dunn nodded firmly.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief and walked straight out the door. While walking, he had the strong urge to turn around to ask another, “Are you sure there’s nothing else?”

He resisted that urge and finally left the Keeper room successfully.

“Captain has always been this way. He often forgets things.” As Rozanne walked by his side, she softly disparaged the captain, “Even my granny has a better memory than him. Of course, he only forgets the trivial stuff. Yea, trivial stuff. Klein, I’ll call you Klein in the future. Mrs. Orianna is a very affable person. It is easy to hit it off with her. Her father is a watchsmith with

excellent skill...”

As Klein listened to the brown-haired girl rattle on, he stepped into the stairwell and returned to the upper floor. He found Mrs. Orianna in the far office on the right-hand side.

She was a black-haired woman dressed in a flounce lace dress. She appeared in her thirties and had fashionable curly hair. Her pair of green eyes were clear and smiling, and she seemed refined and elegant.

After Orianna heard Rozanne repeat Dunn Smith’s instructions, she took out a note and wrote an advance slip.

“Sign here. Do you have a seal? If not, you can leave a thumbprint.”

“Alright.” Now familiar with the procedures, Klein completed the formalities.

Orianna took out a copper key and opened the safe in the room. As she counted the pounds, she said with a smile, “You are lucky. We have enough cash today. By the way, Klein, were you invited by Captain because you were involved in a paranormal activity and the fact that you have a specialty?”

“Yes, you have an impeccable intuition.” Klein was not stingy with his compliments.

Orianna took out four notes with light-gray backgrounds with deep black patterns printed on them. After locking the safe, she turned around and smiled.

“That’s because I had a similar experience too.”

“Really?” Klein showed an appropriate level of surprise.

“Do you know about the serial killer that sent Tingen City into a frenzy sixteen years ago?” Orianna handed over the four gold pounds to Klein.

“...Yes! It’s the one which had five girls killed consecutively. Some had their hearts and stomachs removed by that Bloody Butcher? My mother often used that matter to scare my sister when we were young,” said Klein as he thought about it.

He received the notes and discovered that two of them were in five pound denominations and two of them were in one pound denominations. All of them had a gray background and were inked in black. The four corners had complicated patterns and special ink to prevent counterfeiting.

The former notes were slightly bigger and in the middle of them was Loen Kingdom's fifth king, George III's direct ancestor, Henry Augustus I. He wore a white hair band above his rotund face. His eyes were slender and he had an abnormally serious expression. However, Klein felt an indescribably sense of closeness to him.

This was a five-pound note!

It's almost equal to four weeks of Benson's salary!

In the middle of the one-pound note was George III's father, the former king, William Augustus VI. This Might-wielder had a thick mustache and a firm gaze. While he was in power, he freed the Loen Kingdom from the shackles of the old order, allowing his nation to regain the pinnacle spot.

They were all 'good kings...' Klein could faintly smell the notes' ink that elated and refreshed him.

"Yes, if the Nighthawks had not come in time, I would have been the sixth victim." Mrs. Orianna's tone still hinted at a sense of lingering fear despite the incident having happened more than ten years ago.

"I heard that the serial killer, no— The Butcher was a Beyonder?" Klein carefully folded the paper notes and placed it in an inner pocket of his suit. Then, he patted the area a few times to confirm it was there.

"Yes." Mrs. Orianna gave a firm nod. "He had killed even more before that. The reason why he was captured was because he was preparing a ritual for the devil."

"No wonder he wanted different organs... Sorry, Mrs. Orianna for making you recall such unpleasant memories," said Klein sincerely.

Orianna smiled. "I'm no longer afraid... I was studying accountancy in business school back then. After that incident, I've been here ever since. Alright, I'll stop keeping you from what you should do. You still need to head to Old Neil's."

"Goodbye, Mrs. Orianna." Klein took off his hat and bowed before leaving the office. Before he went downstairs, he could not help but pat his inner pocket to make sure the twelve pounds was still there.

He did a turn at a cross-junction and headed right. It did not take him long to see a half-closed iron door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

While he knocked, an aged voice sounded from inside.

"Come in."

Klein pushed open the metal door and discovered a cramped room which only allowed for a desk and two chairs.

There was a tightly locked iron door inside the room and behind the desk was a hoary elder dressed in a class black robe. He was reading a few yellowed pages from a book with the illumination of a gas lamp.

He raised his head and looked at the door.

"Are you Klein Moretti? Rozanne said you were very polite when she came over a while ago."

"Miss Rozanne is really a friendly person. Good afternoon, Mr. Neil." Klein took off his hat as a gesture of respect.

“Have a seat.” Neil pointed to the silver tin can with complex flowery patterns on the table. “Would you like a cup of handground coffee?”

The wrinkles at the edge of his eyes and mouth were deeply recessed. His dark red pupils appeared slightly turbid.

“It doesn’t seem like you drink coffee?” Klein acutely noticed that Neil’s porcelain cup was filled with clear water.

“Haha, it’s a habit of mine. I do not drink coffee after three in the afternoon,” Neil explained with a laugh.

“Why?” Klein asked in passing.

Neil held back his smile as he looked into Klein’s eyes and said, “I’m afraid that it would affect my sleep at night. It will make me hear the murmurings of the unknown existence.”

Klein was momentarily unable to answer him as he changed the subject.

“Mr. Neil, what documents and books should I read?” As he spoke, he took out the note written by

Dunn.

“Anything that has to do with history, or is complicated and incomplete. To be honest, I have always been trying to learn, but all I can achieve is a rudimentary grasp. It’s just too troublesome for the other material, such as people’s diaries, contemporary books, epitaphs, etc...” lamented Neil. “For example, the things I have here require more detailed historical records to determine the exact content.”

“Why?” Klein turned confused.

Neil pointed to a few yellowed pages in front of him.

“These are from Roselle Gustav’s lost diary before his death. In order to keep things secret, he used strange symbols he invented to take records.”

Emperor Roselle? The transmigration senior? Klein was taken aback as he immediately listened attentively.

“Many people believe that he did not truly die, but instead became a hidden god. Therefore, cults which revere him have always been holding various rituals to attempt at gaining power. We will occasionally encounter such incidents and obtain a few original or duplicated copies of the diary,” Neil said with a shake of his head. “Till date, no one has been able to decipher the special symbols’ true meaning. Therefore, the Holy Cathedral has permitted us to keep copies for research, hoping that it would bring them a pleasant surprise.”

With that said, Neil revealed a smug smile.

“I have already deciphered a few symbols and have confirmed that they represent numbers. Look at what I discovered. It’s actually a diary! Yes, I wish to use history from different periods, especially events that revolved around the emperor. By comparing those records to the ones written in the diary for the corresponding day, I can try to interpret more of the symbols.

“That’s the mind of a genius, right?” The old gentleman with white hair and deep wrinkles looked at Klein with bright eyes.

Klein nodded in agreement.

“Yes.”

“Haha, you can also take a look at it. Tomorrow, you will have to help me with this diary.” Neil pushed the few yellowed pages towards Klein.

Klein turned them around and took a glance at them, but it immediately stunned him!

Although the ‘symbols’ had been copied in terribly ugly fashion, to the point of looking a little distorted, there was no way he could be mistaken...

This was because they were words he was most familiar with.

Chinese!

*And it’s f**king Simplified Chinese!*

In that instant, Klein even believed that he had transmigrated back. However, the elegant gas lamp surrounded by brass grids and the silver-inlaid tin, which Old Neil kept his handground coffee in, made him recognize the reality he was in.

The transmigrator, Emperor Roselle, is really a fellow countryman of mine? He was using Simplified Chinese—which doesn't exist in this world—to record secrets? With the indescribable feeling of identifying an old friend in a different world, Klein quickly read through the three pages.

"18th November. Truly a fascinating matter. A blue-sky experimentation and a chance mistake made me discover the pathetic fellow lost and trapped in the deep darkness amid the storms. He can only approach the reality of this world on the day of the full moon every month; yet, he is unable to transmit his cries. He is lucky to have met me, the protagonist of this era."

"After reading the paragraph I wrote above, I suddenly felt a little down. Even my Chinese is written like a translation. Four decades have passed in a finger snap. My past memories feel more like a dream."

"1184, 1st January. At the grand New Year Gala, Lady Florena was truly splendid."

"2nd January. My diplomats are all idiots!"

"3rd January. I made a hasty choice back then. In hindsight, I should have chosen the Apprentice, the Seer, or the Marauder.

Unfortunately, there is no way of redoing it."

"4th January. Why are my children so stupid? I've repeated myself so many times. Do not be fooled by those charlatans! The key thing about potions is not about grasping them, but digesting them! It's nothing about tapping powers, but acting! And the name of a potion is not solely symbolic at its core, but a concrete imagery, and the 'key' to digestion!"

"9th September. An alliance opposing me has been established. Feysac from the north, Loen from the east, Feynapotter from the south. My enemies have finally joined forces, but I have no fear. I will use facts to teach them that the generations of weapons and knowledge cannot be compensated by mere numbers and lowgrade Sequencers. Besides, it's not as though I do not have subordinates. As for the higher-grades, heh heh. Have they forgotten who I am?"

"23rd September. I have lost communications with the ship seeking the Forsaken Land of God. I should consider inventing wireless telegraphs. I hope it would not be affected by the storm."

"24th September. Miss Ithaca is more mesmerizing than Lady Florena. Perhaps, I'm just being nostalgic about my youth."

Due to the complexity of characters in Simplified Chinese, the font was slightly larger than normal, leading to less content on each page. Furthermore, for preservational and research purposes, the back of each page was left empty. But even so, Klein still felt an upheaval of emotions when he read the diary. In particular, Emperor Roselle's description of the crux of potions made him feel like he found the path to the solution. He was thrilled at having learned a priceless secret.

Perhaps, this will be a beacon for my future path as a Beyonder! Well, the three pages belong to entries at different times. It seems Emperor Roselle only writes the year on the first entry of each year. It cannot be determined which year the two pages with

September and November belong to...Who is the pathetic fellow he discovered?

What do "digesting" and "acting" actually mean?

Where is the Forsaken Land of God? ...

These questions bubbled in Klein's head. It made him eager to immediately gather all of Emperor Roselle's diary and read it from cover to cover!

"Klein?" At that moment, Old Neil asked puzzledly across him.

Klein jolted awake as he hurriedly covered it up with a laugh. "I thought I would be the most special one. I was trying to decipher and interpret it."

"You are young indeed." Old Neil nodded, laughing. "I once believed that I was the most special one as well."

Klein flipped through the three pages in his hand and after confirming that he had not missed anything, he handed it over to Old Neil and thoughtlessly asked, "Do we only have these few pages?"

I want to see more of Emperor Roselle's diary! "Did you think there would be many?" Old Neil caressed the scripts as his wrinkles deepened from his scoff. "There are not many incidents a year that involve Beyonders and mystery to begin with. Sigh, the major reason is the gradual extinction of extraordinary species in our Northern Continent. Without them, there won't be a lot of potions, causing the number of Beyonders to reduce with time. Sigh, over the past few centuries, dragons, giants, and elves have become simply records in books. Even the seafolks are no longer seen near the coastal waters."

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly thought of a meme. He immediately said with a smile, "I think it's time to establish a Dragons and Giants Protection Association."

Old Neil looked confused when he heard that. It took him quite some time to figure out what it meant. After figuring out its meaning, he rapped the table and laughed quite heartily in a not-so-gentlemanly manner.

"Haha, Klein, you really are humorous. This is a tradition of our Loen Kingdom. It's good that young people have a sense of humor. I believe we shouldn't be overly narrow in scope. Why are we only protecting dragons and giants? It should be called Fantastic Beasts Protection Association."

"No, no, no. How can we forget those poor plants?" Klein shook his head.

They exchanged looks and proclaimed in unison: "Fantastic Organisms Protection Association!"

Both of them laughed tacitly. The awkwardness and unfamiliarity of the atmosphere between them dissipated considerably.

"There are fewer interesting young people like you these days... Where was I?" Old Neil's wrinkles suffused a smile as he said, "I remember. There are not many incidents a year that involve Beyonders and mystery to begin with. The retards who revere Emperor Roselle are the minority of the minority. It's already pretty good that we can obtain three scripts... Well, the other larger cathedrals or dioceses might have some..."

After muttering a few words, he took the approval note which Klein had placed on the table earlier and took a look.

"Are they pistol bullets, rifle bullets, or steam-pressured bullets?" "It's a revolver," answered Klein

honestly.

"Alright. I'll go get them. Ahem, do you have an underarm holster? As a gentleman, we can't let you have something bulging below your waist in public." Old Neil made a joke that all men understood.

"Heh, no. Do I need to get Captain to include it?" Klein smiled cooperatively.

Old Neil stood up and said, “There’s no need. I just need to make a record. It’s an accessory item. Repeat after me: accessory item.” “Were you a teacher in the past?” joked Klein.

“I spent some time at the Church’s Sunday school and free schools.” Old Neil waved the note and took out a key from the drawer. He then opened the iron door that led into an inner chamber.

Beyonders do not seem much different from commoners... Klein murmured silently before casting his gaze on the table where the three pages of the diary were.

Emperor Roselle is indeed involved in the realm of mystery...

His diary is invaluable...To others, they are just pieces of scrap paper. It is unknown when they will be deciphered, but they are a valuable treasure to me! I wonder where the remaining parts of the diary are...

I have to think of ways to get more... Klein’s mind went through upheavals as he could hardly calm down. This continued until Old Neil came out and closed the iron door.

“Ten demon hunting bullets, thirty revolver bullets. An ox-hide underarm holster, and a Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department badge. Please count them and give them a try. Remember to sign the log book.” Old Neil placed the items down on the table.

The revolver bullets were arranged neatly in a paper box which was divided into three layers. The bullets shimmered with a yellow sheen just like the bullets back home, but they appeared narrower.

As for the demon hunting bullets, they were kept in a small iron box. The shape was identical to regular revolver bullets, but their surface was silver in color. Upon a more careful examination, there were complicated and dazzling patterns with tiny Sacred Emblems—a black background dotted with stars and a half crimson moon—engraved at the bottom.

The ox-hide holster felt solid and it came with a belt and buckle. Beside it was a badge half the size of a palm. It had a metallic background with “Awwa County Police Department and Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department” inscribed in silver text. They formed almost two sealed circles and surrounded the “two crossed swords and a crown” police emblem.

“Unfortunately, it’s not a Nighthawks badge,” Klein said half wistfully and half probingly.

Old Neil smiled and urged Klein to test the underarm holster.

After he took off his jacket, Klein took quite a bit of effort to buckle up the holster, which hung close to his left armpit.

“Not bad.” He put on his jacket again.

Old Neil sized him up and nodded in satisfaction.

“It suits you well. My judgment is as accurate as usual.”

After putting away the other items into his pockets and signing the log book, Klein had a short, casual conversation with Old Neil before leaving.

Halfway, he suddenly slapped himself in the forehead.

“I forgot to learn more about the Sequences and potions. It’s all the fault of Emperor Roselle’s diary...”

At this point, he was still unaware of what the first Sequence of the complete pathway the Church of Evernight possessed. All he knew was that it started with Sequence 9.

Rozanne had apparently mentioned something... The Sleepless? Just as Klein was slowly walking towards the stairs, a person came down.

He wore tight trousers which made movement easy. His white shirt was not tucked in, and he had a clear romantic temperament of a poet. He was none other than the blackhaired, green-eyed police inspector who had previously come to search Klein's place. They had met upstairs previously, but they had not exchanged words.

"Good afternoon," greeted the young poet-like Nighthawk with a smile.

"Good afternoon. I believe I do not need to introduce myself?" answered Klein humorously.

"There's no need. I have a deep impression of you." The young Nighthawk extended his right hand and said, "Leonard Mitchell. Sequence 8's Midnight Poet."

Sequence 8... He's really a poet... Klein smilingly shook his hand as he returned with a question, "You have a deep impression of me?"

Leonard Mitchell's green eyes were deep as he replied with a very faint smile. "You have a special disposition."

He feels and sounds so gay... The corners of Klein's mouth moved slightly as he barely said with a smile, "I don't think so myself."

"After encountering an accident like that, you remained alive despite not receiving our protection immediately. That makes you special enough." Leonard pointed ahead. "I have to replace Captain. See you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow." Klein turned to make way for the Nighthawk.

As he walked to the ends of the stairwell, Leonard Mitchell suddenly turned around and stared at the stone-paved ground which was illuminated by the yellow sunset. He muttered into the air softly, "Did you manage to notice anything..."

...

"Indeed, there's nothing special about him..."

After he went up the stairs and returned to the reception hall, Klein was about to bid Rozanne farewell when he heard the brown-haired girl mention briskly, “Captain says that you can come on Monday. He wants you to settle your household affairs

first.”

“...Alright.” Klein never expected the Nighthawks’ management to be so humane and accommodating. It made him feel a little grateful.

He was planning on waking early the next morning and making use of the opportunity to “wander around” to visit Tingen University. He planned on informing the staff in charge of the interview that he was not participating in the follow-up interviews. After all, he had originally obtained the opportunity to make the interview because of his professor’s recommendation letter. Regardless, it was basic courtesy to have formal closure. Even if it was not for himself, he had to respect his mentor’s efforts.

And in a world without telephones, where telegrams were charged by the character, and the fact that it would be too late to send a letter, he felt that taking the public carriage to the university was the most economical and suitable solution.

Having received the Captain’s special approval, Klein did not need to tire himself out. He could wake up late and still make his way there on time.

Klein was just about to take off his hat to bid Rozanne farewell when he suddenly thought of something. He looked around and suppressed his voice. “Rozanne, do you know what the starting point of the Church’s complete Sequence is?” He had forgotten to ask Old Neil.

Rozanne’s eyes widened as she looked at Klein in astonishment. “You wish to become a Beyonder?”

Was I that obvious? Klein’s body language betrayed him as he answered in embarrassment, “Having learned that extraordinary and mysterious powers exist in the world, it’s inevitable that I have some yearnings for it.”

“Oh my Goddess. Do you know how dangerous it is? Didn’t Captain tell you? The enemies of Beyonders are not just cultists or dark warlocks, but themselves! People lose control nearly every year. Some even end up sacrificing themselves! Aren’t you going to consider how your family will feel?” Rozanne’s hand gestures amplified her tone as her reaction appeared overly agitated. “Klein, I think the better choice is to be a civilian staff. There’s nearly no danger, and our salary increases every year. After a few years of work, you will have saved up much money, allowing you to rent a bungalow in the North Borough or in the suburbs. You can then marry a rich and charming lady and have a wonderful family, having adorable and naughty little angels...”

“Rozanne, stop! Hold up!” Klein hurriedly stopped her in exasperation when he realized that she was changing the

subject. “I just want to... to, well, understand the basics for now.”

“Alright...” Rozanne fell silent for a few seconds as she lowered her gaze, feeling somewhat sorry. “Due to what happened to my father, whenever I face similar problems, I tend to be... well, you know, a little agitated. However, to be honest, I’m filled with respect towards any man or woman who willingly wishes to be a Nighthawk.”

“I understand, I understand,” echoed Klein.

Rozanne blinked her light brown eyes and added, “My father once said that one should never think that they can resolve hidden risks or combat danger by simply becoming more powerful or a higher Sequencer. In fact, it’s the opposite. They will encounter more terrifying matters. When facing the unknown or a terrifying existence, death and insanity are the only two outcomes. Heh, he ended up

sacrificing himself two weeks after saying that... Klein, don't look at me with pity. My life is great now, really great! It's only right to feel fear towards these matters!"

"I only want to know the basics..." Klein repeated his previous reply, not sure whether he should laugh or cry.

Captain explained it more clearly than you. And even if I do not become a Beyonder, I have already encountered something extraordinary... "Alright," said Rozanne ruminatively. "I've heard Captain's and Old Neil's conversation before. As extraordinary creatures are declining or going extinct, few high Sequencers exist in this era. It's already very impressive to become a Beyonder! Combining our Tingen City and the suburbs, there are hundreds of thousands of people or maybe even more. Yet, there are only about thirty plus Beyonders. Well, it's just my guess... I'm not counting the cultists and dark warlocks who hide in the dark..."

Without waiting for Klein's reply, she seemed to regain her vibrancy as she clenched her fist and brought it to her chest.

"And among these thirty plus Beyonders, most of them are at Sequence 9! Uh, it seems I have gone off topic..."

"It's okay. That was something I wanted to know as well." Klein wished that Rozanne could be like her usual self, revealing more information as she rambled on.

"Anyways, it's already very, very impressive to become a Beyonder!" Rozanne repeated herself. "The starting Sequence of our Church's complete Sequence is Sleepless: Sequence 9,

Sleepless!"

Indeed... Klein nodded as he watched Rozanne finding it hard to stop herself from describing in detail.

"You should be able to guess from the name. A Sleepless is someone who does not need to sleep at night. Three to four hours of rest in the day would be sufficient. Man, I'm so envious... No, not at all! Sleep is a gift bestowed upon us by the Goddess. It's the truest bliss!

"Where was I? Ah, right. A Sleepless can see through the darkness even without any lights. The deeper into the night, the more powerful they become. I mean more powerful in the aspects of their physical strength, their intuition, and their mental capabilities. However, although they can detect unknown dangers that lurk in the dark, they will still rely on demon hunting bullets and other items to handle monsters they are unable to deal with via normal means. My father was once a Sleepless."

Without waiting for Klein to press on, Rozanne continued, "After that, it's Sequence 8's Midnight Poet, and one level higher is Sequence 7's Nightmare."

Nightmare? Klein instantly recalled that Dunn Smith had guided his dreams. He asked as a confirmation, "Captain?"

"You know about it?" Rozanne's mouth nearly turned into an "O" shape.

"Captain once entered my dream..." Klein glanced around as he lowered his voice once more.

"Got it..." Rozanne was enlightened as she answered with a whisper.

She picked up a coffee cup beside her and took a sip before saying wistfully, "There are only two Sequence 7 Beyonders in our Tingen City's Church. It's likely that Captain is one of them. Even if he goes to a large diocese like Backlund, he is still an impressive figure. Some deacons might not even be stronger than he is!"

"So Captain is that impressive." Klein echoed with a smile.

Frankly, Dunn Smith's appearance last night had left a deep impression on him. He had basically believed that Dunn was an extremely powerful Beyonder.

"Of course!" Rozanne proudly straightened her back.

In moments, the scatterbrained her said with a vexed expression, “As for what’s above Sequence 7, I have no idea. Among all the Nighthawks, perhaps only Captain will know.”

“Then what about other starting Sequences? The ones that aren’t complete?” Klein was satisfied as he changed the subject.

It had to be said that Rozanne’s description of Sleepless did match his imaginations and expectations of Beyonders. However, it was not the kind he wished to become. The perfect Sequence 9 was likely one that could study and grasp more knowledge of the mystery. By doing so, he could leverage on them to figure out the reason for his transmigration and lay the foundations of his future transmigration back.

Rozanne thought for a moment before saying with a sigh, “I’m not that interested in this aspect. I only know we have more than other churches. After all, the Goddess is the Mother of Concealment... Well, there should be two or three. Some of our teammates are cold and distant, making me fear them. They also have a strange smell to them. Some members... Well, I mean you should talk to Old Neil. He knows a lot, as well as quite a number of interesting magical rituals. Let me think. He once mentioned his Sequence 9 title, which is also the name of the potion formula... Ah, yes, it’s called Mystery Pryer.”

Quite a number of interesting magical rituals? Mystery Pryer sounds very close to what I want... Klein was slightly delighted.

“In addition, I also know of the name of a Sequence 7, the kind that’s incomplete!” Rozanne said with a flaunting tone. She had just thought of it while recollecting.

“What is it?” Klein was abnormally curious.

In a world where high Sequencers were scarce to the point of them possibly not existing, Sequence 7 was probably considered quite a potent force in the Church.

Rozanne revealed a sweet smile as she replied smugly, “Spirit Medium!”

“Ma’am Daly?” asked Klein subconsciously.

After his initial surprise, he realized that it was nothing unexpected. Only a Sequence 7 Beyonder could achieve such an impressive performance as a medium!

Rozanne’s eyes widened once again as she said in disbelief, “Hhow do you know of that too?”

“I’ve met Ma’am Daly.” Klein did not hide the matter.

“Alright,” said Rozanne with an envious tone. “If I can become a Spirit Medium, one just like Ma’am Daly, then I’ll be willing to be a Beyonder. No, I’ll consider it carefully for ten minutes...”

“Yes, Ma’am Daly fulfills all my imaginations as a Beyonder,” echoed Klein in a slightly exaggerated manner.

Having fulfilled his goals, he chatted idly with Rozanne for a few minutes until he realized he was not getting any new information. He took off his hat and bowed before leaving.

As he walked down the stairs, Klein suddenly stopped after taking a few steps. He reached out to pat the notes in his inner pocket.

Immediately following that, he took out twelve gold pound notes and clenched then tightly in his left palm. Then, he reached his hand into his pocket and refused to release or pull them out again. Without realizing it, a smile appeared on his face.

According to the customs of the Foodaholic Empire—China—a treat to dinner was in order after earning money!

It’s time to give Melissa a treat tonight!

CHAPTER 23: SIDE ARM

As Klein walked down Zouteland and while taking in the warm, humid breeze, he suddenly realized something.

He only had three pence of change. If he returned to Iron Cross Street via public carriage, it would cost him four pence. If he were to hand over a one-gold pound note, it would be akin to using a hundred-dollar bill to buy a bottle of cheap mineral water back on Earth. There was nothing wrong with that, but it was just quite awkward to do so.

Should I use three pence to travel three kilometers and walk the rest of the journey? Klein reached into his pocket with one hand as he slowed down his pace, considering other solutions.

That won't do! Soon, he rejected the idea.

It would take him a while to walk the remaining journey. Considering how he was carrying twelve pounds—a massive fortune—it was not safe!

Furthermore, he had deliberately not brought the revolver with him, afraid that the Nighthawks would confiscate it. If he were to encounter the danger that instigated Welch's death, there was no way he could fight back!

Get some change from a nearby bank? No, no way! There's a 0.5% processing fee. That's way too extravagant! Klein shook his head silently. Just the thought of the fees involved pained his heart!

Having ruled out one solution after another, Klein's eyes suddenly lit up when he saw a clothing shop in front of him!

That's right! Wouldn't the normal course of action be to buy something appropriately priced to get some change? A formal suit, shirt, vest, trousers, leather boots, and a cane were all within budget. They had to be bought sooner or later!

Oh, it's very troublesome when fitting clothes. Besides, Benson knows more about this than me and he's better at bargaining. I should consider it only after he's back... Then should I buy a cane? That's right! As the saying goes, a cane is a gentleman's best choice of defense. It is half as good as a crowbar. A gun in one hand and a cane in the other is the combat style of a civilized person! After debating internally, Klein made up his mind. He turned around and entered the clothing shop, Wilker Clothing and Hats.

The clothing store's layout resembled the clothing stores on Earth. The left wall was filled with rows of formal attires. The middle rows were decked with things like shirts, trousers, vests, and bowties. On the right were leather shoes and boots placed inside glass cabinets.

"Sir, may I help you?" A male salesperson dressed in a white shirt and red vest came over and asked politely.

In Loen Kingdom, rich and powerful gentlemen of high standing enjoyed wearing black suits consisting of white shirts matched with black vests and trousers. Their colors were relatively monotonous, so they required their male servants, salespeople, and service attendants to dress more brightly and colorfully, in order to distinguish themselves from their masters.

In contrast, ladies and mistresses wore dresses of all kinds in glamorous fashions. As such, maidservants would wear black and white.

Klein thought for a moment before answering the male salesperson's question. "A cane. Something that's heavier and harder."

The kind that can crack the skulls of others! The red-vested salesperson sized up Klein furtively before leading him into the store. He then pointed at a row of canes in the corner. "That cane inlaid with gold is made of Ironheart wood. It's both very heavy and hard, and costs eleven soli seven pence. Do you want to give it a try?"

Eleven soli seven pence? Why don't you go rob a bank! Big deal with the gold inlay! Klein was shocked by the price.

With an unperturbed expression, he nodded gently. "Alright."

The salesperson took down the Ironheart wood cane and carefully handed it to Klein, seemingly afraid that Klein would drop and break the merchandise.

Klein took the cane and found it heavy. He tried moving with it and discovered that he could not sway it smoothly as he wanted.

"It's too heavy." Klein shook his head in relief.

This is not an excuse! The salesperson took back the cane and pointed at another three canes.

"This is made of walnut wood, created by Tingen's most famous cane artisan, Mr. Hayes. It's priced at ten soli three pence... This is made of ebony wood and inlaid with silver. It's as hard as iron, costing seven soli six pence... This is made from the core of a white boli tree and also inlaid with silver, costing seven soli ten pence..."

Klein tried each one of them and found them of appropriate weight. He then tapped them with his fingers to gain an understanding of their hardness. Finally, he chose the cheapest one.

"I'll take the one made from ebony wood." Klein pointed at the cane with the silver inlay which the salesperson was holding.

"No problem, Sir. Please follow me to proceed with the payment. In the future, if this cane is scuffed or stained, you can hand it to us for handling for free." The salesperson led Klein to the counter.

Klein took the opportunity to release the four gold-pound notes from his tight grip and removed two of the smaller denominations.

"Good day, Sir. It will be seven soli six pence." The cashier behind the counter greeted with a smile.

Klein was planning on maintaining his gentlemanly image, but when he extended his hand with the one-gold pound note, he could not help but ask, "Can I get a discount?"

"Sir, what we have is all hand-crafted, so our costs are very high." the salesperson beside him answered. "Since our boss isn't here, we are unable to lower the prices."

The cashier behind the counter added, "Sir, sorry about that." "Alright." Klein handed the note over and received the black silver-inlaid cane.

While waiting for the change to be given to him, he took a few steps back and distanced himself from them. He swung around his side arm as a test.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The wind sounded heavy when the cane sliced through the air. Klein nodded in satisfaction.

He looked forward again, prepared to see notes and coins, but was appalled to see the red-vested salesperson retreating far away. The cashier behind the counter had retracted into a corner, leaning close to a double-barreled shotgun hanging to the wall.

The Loen Kingdom had a semi-regulated policy on firearms. To possess a firearm, one needed to apply for an all-purpose weapon permit or a hunter's license. Regardless of which type, one could still not be in possession of restricted military firearms such as repeaters, steam-pressured guns, or six-barrel machine guns.

An all-purpose weapon permit could be used to purchase or store any kind of civilian firearm, but earning the certificate was extremely troublesome. Even merchants of substantial standing might not be approved. A hunter's license was relatively easy. Even farmers in the suburbs could receive approval. However, the license was limited to hunting guns with restricted numbers. People with

sizable assets would tend to apply for one to use it for self-defense in emergency situations, such as now...

Klein looked at the two wary salespeople as the corners of his mouth twitched. He chuckled dryly. “Not bad. This cane is perfect for swinging. I’m very pleased.”

Realizing that he had no intention to assault them, the cashier behind the counter relaxed. He handed over the notes and coins he had taken out over with both hands.

Klein took a look at what he received and saw two five-soli notes, two one-soli notes, a five-pence coin, and a one-penny coin. He could not help but nod inwardly.

After a two-second pause, he ignored the way the salespeople looked at him and unfurled the four notes towards the light to ensure that the anti-counterfeit watermarks were present.

Klein put away the notes and coins when he was done. With the cane in hand, he tipped his hat and walked out of Wilker Clothing and Hats. He extravagantly spent six pence by taking a short-distance trackless carriage before transferring once before reaching home safe and sound.

After closing the door, he counted the eleven pounds and twelve soli notes thrice before placing them into the desk drawer. He then found the bronze revolver with the wooden grip.

Clink! Clang! Five brass bullets fell onto the table when Klein inserted the silver demon hunting bullets which had complicated patterns and the Dark Sacred Emblem into the revolver’s cylinder.

Like before, he only inserted five rounds and left an empty spot to prevent any misfires. The remaining rounds were placed together with the five ordinary bullets in a small iron case.

Pa! He snapped the cylinder in place, giving him a sense of security.

He excitedly lodged the revolver into the holster at his armpit and buckled it securely. Then, he repeatedly practiced unbuckling and drawing the gun. He rested whenever his arms ached, and this continued until sunset when he heard the sounds of tenants walking along the corridor outside.

Phew! Klein let out a foul breath before putting his revolver back into his underarm holster.

Only then did he take off his formal suit and vest. He wore back his usual brownish-yellow coat and swung his arms to relax them.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He heard the sound of nearing footsteps before the twisting sound of an inserted key.

Melissa with her soft, black hair entered. Her nose twitched a little as she swept her gaze towards the unlit stove. The luster in her eyes dimmed slightly.

“Klein, I’ll heat up the leftovers from last night. Benson will likely be home tomorrow.” Melissa turned to look at her brother.

Klein had his hands in his pocket as he leaned against the edge of the desk. He smiled and said, “No,

let’s eat out.” “Eat out?” Melissa questioned in surprise.

“How does Silver Crown Restaurant at Daffodil Street sound? I heard they serve delicious food,” suggested Klein.

“B-but...” Melissa was still confused.

Klein grinned and said, “To celebrate my new job.”

“You found a job?” Melissa’s voice rose unknowingly, “B-but, isn’t the Tingen University interview tomorrow?”

“Another job.” Klein gave a faint smile before fishing the stacked notes from the drawer. “They even gave me an advance of four weeks’ pay.”

Melissa looked at the gold pounds and soli as she widened her eyes.

“Goddess... You- they- what job did you get?”

This... Klein’s expression froze as he deliberated on his words.

“A security company whose mission is to seek, collect, and protect ancient relics. They were in need of a professional consultant. It’s a five-year contract, earning me three pounds a week.”

“Were you vexing over this last night?” asked Melissa after a moment of silence.

Klein nodded. “Yes, although being an academic at Tingen

University is respectable, I prefer this job.”

“Well, it isn’t bad either.” Melissa gave an encouraging smile. She asked half-suspiciously and half-curiously, “Why would they give you an advance payment of four full weeks?”

“It’s because we need to move. We need a place with more rooms and a bathroom that belongs to us,” said Klein while grinning and shrugging.

He felt that his smile was impeccable, just short of the word: “Surprised?”

Melissa was stunned momentarily before she suddenly spoke out in a fluster, “Klein, we are living quite well now. My occasional grumblings of not having a personal bathroom is just a habit. Do you remember Jenny? She lived next door to us, but ever since her father was injured and lost his job, they had no choice but to move to Lower Street. The family of five ended up staying in one room, with three of them sleeping in a bunk bed and two of them sleeping on the ground. They even wish to rent the remaining empty spot to someone...

“Compared to them, we are really very lucky. Don’t waste your salary on this matter. Besides, I love Mrs. Smyrin’s bakery.”

Sis, why is your reaction completely different from how it played out in my head... Klein’s expression went blank when he heard his sister.

CHAPTER 24: PENNY-PINCHER

The sky outside was gradually dyed golden as Klein looked into Melissa's eyes. He was momentarily at a loss for words; none of the lines he prepared could be used.

He coughed lightly twice as he quickly racked his brains.

"Melissa, this isn't a waste of salary. In the future, my colleagues, as well as Benson's colleagues might visit. Are we going to host them in such a place? When Benson and I get married and have wives, are we still going to sleep in bunk beds?"

"None of you have fiancées yet, right? We can wait a little while and save up more money in the meantime," answered Melissa in a logically concise manner.

"No, Melissa. This is a societal rule." Klein was stumped and could only count on lofty principles. "Since I'm earning three pounds a week, I should look like I'm earning three pounds a week."

To be honest, having rented an apartment before with others, Zhou Mingrui was no stranger to his present living conditions as Klein. He was very used to it, but it was because of his past experience that he knew how inconvenient such an environment was for a girl. Furthermore, his goal was to become a Beyonder and study mysticism to find his way home. In the future, he was bound to conduct some magical rituals at home. Having too many people in the apartment building made incidents prone to happen.

Klein saw that Melissa was about to continue arguing, and hurriedly added, "Don't worry. I'm not planning to get a bungalow, but probably a terrace. Basically, it has to have a bathroom we can call ours. Also, I like Mrs. Smyrin's bread, Tingen biscuits, and lemon cakes too. We can first consider places near Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street."

Melissa pouted her lips slightly and fell silent for a moment before nodding slowly.

"Besides, I'm in no rush to move either. We have to wait for Benson to return," said Klein with a chuckle. "We can't have him be shocked when he opens the door to find nothing, right? Imagine him saying in astonishment—'Where are my things? Where are my siblings? Where's my home? Is this my home? Did I make a mistake? Goddess, wake me up if this is a dream. Why is my home gone after a few days of absence!?'"

His mimicking of Benson's tone made Melissa involuntarily smile as her eyes scrunched up and revealed her shallow dimples.

"No, Mr. Franky would definitely be waiting by the door to get Benson to hand over the apartment keys. Benson wouldn't even be able to come up." The girl disparaged the miserly landlord.

In the Moretti household, all of them would like to make Mr. Franky the butt of their jokes for every trivial and major matter. It was all thanks to Benson who initiated this practice.

"Right, there's no way he would switch locks for the tenants after us," Klein echoed with a smile. He pointed at the door and quipped, "Miss Melissa, shall we head to Silver Crown Restaurant for a celebration?"

Melissa sighed gently and said, "Klein, do you know Selena? My classmate and my good friend?"

Selena? An image of a girl with wine-red hair and deep brown eyes surfaced in Klein's mind. Her parents were Evernight Goddess believers. They had named her after St. Selena as a blessing. She was not yet sixteen, and was half a year younger than Melissa. She was a happy, cheerful, and outgoing lady.

"Yes." Klein nodded in affirmation.

"Her elder brother, Chris, is a lawyer. He currently earns close to three pounds a week as well. His fiancée works part time as a typist," described Melissa. "They have been engaged for more than four

years. To ensure a decent and stable life after marriage, they are still saving money to this very day. They have yet to go down the wedding aisle and plan to wait for at least another year. According to Selena, there are many people like her brother. They typically get married after twenty-eight. You have to make advanced preparations and save up. Don't squander your money."

It's just a meal at a restaurant. Is there a need to preach at me... Klein was rendered at a loss whether to laugh or cry. After a few seconds of thought, he said, "Melissa, I'm already earning three pounds a week, and I'll have increments every year. There's no need for you to worry."

"But we need to save some money in the case of any unexpected emergencies. For example, what if that security company suddenly closes down? I have a classmate whose father's company went bankrupt. He had to find temporary work at the pier and their living conditions turned terrible instantly. She had no choice but to quit school," advised Melissa with a serious expression.

"..." Klein extended his hand to cover his face. "T-that security company and the government... Yes, it has some connections with the government. It will not easily close down."

"But even the government isn't stable. After every election, if the party in power changes, many people will have their positions stripped off. It turns into a mess." Melissa retorted in an unyielding manner.

...Sis, you sure know a lot... Klein found the humor in his exasperation as he shook his head. "Alright then...

"Then I'll boil some soup with the leftovers from yesterday. Buy some pan-fried fish, a slab of black-pepper beef, a small bottle of butter, and a cup of malt beer for me. Anyway, there should still be some celebration."

They were commonly-sold items by hawkers on Iron Cross Street. A piece of pan-fried fish was six to eight pence; a not-sobig piece of black-peppered beef was five pence; a cup of malt beer was a penny; and a bottle of butter weighing about a quarter pound was four pence, but buying a pound of butter would only cost one soli three pence.

The original Klein was responsible for buying ingredients during holidays, so he was no stranger to the prices. Klein did a mental estimate that Melissa would need about one soli six pence. Therefore, he took out two one-soli notes.

"Alright." Melissa did not object to Klein's proposal. She put down her backpack of stationery and took the notes.

When he saw his sister taking out a tiny bottle for the butter and pots for the other food before briskly walking to the door, Klein thought for a moment and shouted out to her. "Melissa, use the remaining money to buy some fruits."

There were many hawkers on Iron Cross Street who would buy low-quality or expiring fruits from other places. The residents were not outraged about this because the prices were extremely cheap. They could taste the magnificent flavors after removing the rotten parts, so it was a cheap enjoyment.

With that said, Klein took a few brisk steps forward and took out the remaining copper pennies from his pocket and stuffed it into his sister's palm.

"Ah?" Melissa's brown eyes looked at her brother in puzzlement.

Klein took two steps back and smiled. "Remember to go to Mrs. Smyrin's. Reward yourself with a tiny lemon cake."

"..." Melissa's mouth widened as she blinked. Finally, she said a single word, "Okay."

She quickly turned around, opened the door, and ran toward the stairwell.

...

A river tore through the land, with cedar and maple trees lining the banks; the air so fresh, it was intoxicating.

Klein, who was here to put closure to his interview, had his revolver with him. He held his cane and paid six pence for the public carriage. He walked down a cemented path and approached a three-story stone building which was shaded by greenery. It was Tingen University's administrative block.

"It's truly worthy of being one of the two major universities of the Loen Kingdom..." With this being his first time here, Klein sighed as he walked.

Compared to Tingen University, Khoy University right across the river could only be described as shabby.

"Heave-ho!"

"Heave-ho!"

Voices approached slowly as two rowing boats made their way upstream across the Khoy River. Oars were being rowed in an orderly and rhythmic manner.

This was a rowing sport that was popular among all the universities in the Loen Kingdom. With Klein requiring a scholarship to finance his university studies, he, Welch, and the others had joined Khoy University's rowing club and were pretty good at it.

"This is youth..." Klein stopped and looked into the distance before sighing wistfully.

Such sights would no longer be seen in another week since school would break for summer.

As he proceeded down a road sheltered by trees, Klein stopped by a three-story stone building. He entered after successfully registering himself and easily found his way to the office of the person who had tended to him the other time.

Knock! Knock! Knock! He knocked lightly on the half-closed door.

"Come in." A man's voice sounded from inside.

A middle-aged instructor dressed in a white shirt and black tuxedo frowned when he saw Klein enter. "There's another hour until the interview."

"Mr. Stone, do you still remember me? I'm a student of Senior Associate Professor Cohen, Klein Moretti. You have read my recommendation letter before." Klein smiled as he took off his hat.

Harvin Stone stroked his black beard and asked, puzzled, "Is there something wrong? I'm not in charge of interviews."

"Here's the situation. I've already found a job, so I won't be participating in the interview today." Klein gave his reason for coming.

"I see..." When Harvin Stone learned of the reason, he stood up and reached out his right hand. "Congratulations. You are really a polite lad. I will inform the professor and senior associate professors."

Klein shook Harvin's hand and planned on making a little small talk before bidding him farewell when he heard a familiar voice behind him.

"Moretti, you found another job?"

Klein turned around and saw an elder with a head of silver hair that left a deep impression on his silhouette. His deep, blue eyes sunk deep into his face and he had few wrinkles. The man looked sharp in his black tuxedo.

"Good afternoon, Mentor. Mr. Azik," he hurriedly greeted. "Why are the two of you here?"

The elder was none other than Senior Associate Professor of Khoy University's history department, who was also his mentor, Mr. Quentin Cohen. Beside Cohen was a middle-aged man with bronze-

colored skin of average build. He did not have any facial hair and held a newspaper in his hand. His hair was black and his pupils brown. His facial features were soft as his eyes revealed an indescribable sense of weariness like it had seen the vicissitudes of life. Beneath his right ear was a black mole which could only be seen if looked at carefully.

Klein recognized him since he was Khoy University's history department lecturer, Mr. Azik, who often helped the original Klein. He enjoyed debating with his mentor, Senior Associate Professor Cohen. They often had a clash of opinion, but even so, they were best friends; otherwise, they would not have enjoyed meeting up for a chat.

Cohen nodded and said with a relaxed tone, "Azik and I are here to participate in an academic conference. What kind of job did you get?"

"It's a security company which seeks, collects, and protects ancient relics. They were in need of a professional consultant and are paying me three pounds a week." Klein repeated what he said to his sister yesterday. Following that, he explained, "As you know, I prefer exploring history, instead of summarizing it."

Cohen nodded slightly and said, "Everyone has their own choices. I'm very happy that you bothered to come to Tingen University to inform them instead of just not showing up."

At that moment, Azik interjected, "Klein, do you know what happened to Welch and Naya? I read in the newspapers that they were killed by burglars."

The incident has become a case of armed burglary? And why is it already in the newspapers? Klein was taken aback as he weighed over his words.

"I'm not very clear of the specifics as well. Welch had obtained a diary of the Solomon Empire's Antigonus family from the Fourth Epoch. He sought my help in interpreting it. I helped them for the first few days, but I later got busy with job hunting. The police even came to me two days ago."

He deliberately divulged the matter regarding the Solomon Empire and the Antigonus family in hopes of getting any information from the two history teachers.

"The Fourth Epoch..." Cohen muttered with a frown.

The bronze-skinned and weary eyes of Azik went blank first before he inhaled. He rubbed his temple with his newspaperwielding left hand and said, "Antigonus... rings a bell... But why can't I remember..."

While Azik muttered to himself, he subconsciously shot a glance at Quentin Cohen, seemingly hoping for hints to jolt his memories.

Cohen, with his deep set blue eyes, shook his head without any hesitation. “I do not have any impression of it.”

“...Alright then. Perhaps, it just shares a root word.” Azik lowered his left hand and gave a self-deprecating laugh.

Klein was rather disappointed with the outcome, and he could not help but add on. “Mentor, Mr. Azik, as both of you know, I’m very interested in exploring and restoring the history of the Fourth Epoch. If you ever recall anything or obtain relevant information, could you please write to me?”

“No problem.” As a result of Klein’s actions today, the silverhaired Senior Associate Professor was rather pleased with him.

Azik also nodded and said, “Is your address still the same as before?”

“For now, but I’ll be moving soon. I’ll write a letter to inform you when the time comes,” replied Klein in a respectful manner.

Cohen shook his black cane and said, “It’s indeed about time you moved to a place with a better environment.”

At that moment, Klein caught a glance at the newspaper in Azik’s hand. He deliberated on his words before saying, “Mentor, Mr. Azik, what did the newspapers say regarding Welch and Naya? I only learned a little from the police who were in charge of the investigations.”

Azik was just about to answer when Cohen suddenly pulled out the pocket watch that was linked to his black tuxedo by a golden chain.

Click! He opened the pocket watch and tapped his cane.

“The meeting is about to begin. Azik, we can’t be delayed any further. Give the newspaper to Moretti.”

“Alright.” Azik handed over the newspaper he had read to Klein. “We will be going upstairs. Remember to write a letter. Our address has yet to change; it’s still the Khoy University History Department Office. Haha.”

He laughed as he turned around and left the room with Cohen.

Klein took off his hat and bowed. After watching the two gentlemen leave, he bade farewell to owner of the office, Harvin Stone. He proceeded across the corridor and slowly exited the gray three-story building.

With his back against the sun, he lifted up his cane and unfolded the newspaper and saw the title: “Tingen Morning Post.”

Tingen sure has all sorts of newspapers and magazines... There is the Morning Post, Evening Post, the Honest Paper, Backlund Daily Tribune, Tussock Times, family magazines and book reviews... Klein casually recalled the several names that surfaced in his mind. Of course, a number of them were not local. They were distributed via steam locomotives.

Now that the papermaking and printing industries were getting more advanced, the cost of a newspaper has already decreased to the price of a penny. The audience it reached also grew wider and wider.

Klein did not scrutinize the details of the newspaper, quickly flipping to the News section with the report “Armed Burglary Murder.”

“...According to the police department, the scene at Mr. Welch’s home was a horrible sight. There was missing gold, jewelry, and money, as well as anything valuable that could be easily taken away. Not

even a penny was left behind. There is reason to believe that this was done by a merciless group of criminals that would not hesitate to kill the innocent, such as Mister Welch and Madam Naya, once sight of their faces were caught."

"This is outright contempt for our kingdom's laws! This is a challenge to public security! No one wishes to have such an encounter! Of course, one piece of good news is that the police have located the murderer and captured the main culprit. We will do our best to provide news on any follow-ups."

"Reporter: John Browning."

The matter has been handled and covered up... As Klein walked through the boulevard, he nodded in a hardly noticeable manner.

He flipped through the newspaper as he strolled down the path, reading the other news articles and serials in the process.

Suddenly, he felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand, as though needles were stabbing at him.

Someone is watching me? Observing me? Monitoring me? Various thoughts welled up in him as Klein had a faint realization.

Back on Earth, he had once felt an invisible gaze before ultimately discovering the source of the gaze. However, it had never felt as crystal clear as what he was experiencing now!

This was the same in the original Klein's memory fragments!

Was it the transmigration or the mysterious luck enhancement ritual which enhanced my sixth sense? Klein fought back the urge to seek out the observer. Using his knowledge from reading novels and watching movies, he slowed his pace and put away the newspaper before looking toward Khoy River.

Following that, he acted as if he was admiring the scenery, slowly turning his head in different directions. He acted natural as he turned around, taking in everything with his eyes.

Other than the trees, grassy plains, and students passing by in the distance, there was no other person there.

But Klein was certain that someone was watching him!

This... Klein's heart raced as his blood surged through his body with the intense thumping.

He unfolded the papers and covered half his face, afraid that anyone would discover anything wrong with his expression.

Meanwhile, he clenched his cane and readied himself to draw his gun.

One step. Two steps. Three steps. Klein proceeded forward slowly.

The feeling of being spied upon remained, but there was no sudden outburst of danger.

He walked through the boulevard in a somewhat stiff manner and arrived at the waiting point for public carriages when a carriage pulled up coincidentally.

"Iron... Zoute... No, Champagne Street." Klein continually dismissed his thoughts.

He originally planned on heading home immediately, but he was afraid of leading an observer of unknown motives to his apartment. Following that, he thought of heading to Zouteland Street to seek help from the Nighthawks or his colleagues. However, he thought otherwise, afraid that he would end up alerting his enemy and expose the Nighthawks. Therefore, he casually chose somewhere else.

"Six pence," the ticketing officer replied routinely.

Klein did not bring any gold pounds with him today. He had hidden the money in the usual spot and had only taken two soli notes with him. And before he came, he had spent the same amount of money, leaving him with one soli six pence. Therefore, he took out all his coins and handed them to the ticketing officer.

He found a seat after boarding the carriage, and finally with the closing of the carriage doors, Klein felt that unease of being watched vanish!

He exhaled slowly as he felt his limbs tingle slightly.

What do I do?

What should I do next? Klein looked out the carriage as he racked his brains for a solution.

Until he was clear about the intentions of the person watching him, Klein had to assume that there was malicious intent!

Many thoughts sprang up in his mind, but he dismissed them. He had never experienced such an event, and had to use a few minutes to organize his ideas.

He had to notify the Nighthawks; only they could truly get rid of this threat!

But I can't head there directly or I might expose them. Perhaps, that might be their goal...

Following this train of thought, Klein crudely surmised various possibilities as his thoughts turned clearer.

Fffffff! He exhaled as he regained some semblance of composure. He looked seriously at the scenery outside flying past him.

There were no accidents along the way to Champagne Street, but when Klein opened the door and stepped out of the car, he immediately had the uneasy feeling of being watched again!

He acted as though he had not sensed anything. He took the newspaper and his cane, slowly making his way in the direction of Zouteland Street.

But he did not enter that street. Instead, he took another route to the Red Moonlight Street behind. There was a beautiful white plaza there, as well as a large cathedral with a pointy roof!

Saint Selena Cathedral!

The Tingen headquarters of the Church of Evernight!

As a believer, there was nothing odd about him participating in Mass or praying on his day off.

The cathedral exhibited a design similar to Earth's Gothic style. It also had a tall, black, and imposing clock tower, situated between blue and red checkered windows.

Klein stepped into the cathedral and followed an aisle into the prayer hall. Along the way, the stained windows were composed of red and blue glass patterns that allowed colored light to shine into the hall. The blue was closer to black, the red the same color as the crimson moon. It made the surroundings seem unusually dark and mysterious.

The feeling of being watched vanished. Klein acted unfazed as he walked toward the open prayer hall.

There were no high windows here. The deep darkness was emphasized, but behind the arc-shaped holy altar, on the wall directly opposite the door, were about twenty circular fist-sized holes that allowed the radiant sunlight to enter the hall.

It was akin to pedestrians seeing the starry sky when suddenly looking up into the dark night to see the shimmering stars in all their nobility, purity, and holiness.

Even though Klein had always believed that gods could be analyzed and understood, he could not help but lower his head here.

The bishop was preaching in a gentle tone as Klein silently made his way down the aisle that split the pews into two columns. He searched for an empty area close to the passageway before slowly taking a seat.

Leaning his cane onto the back of the pew in front of him, Klein took off his hat and placed it onto his lap together with the newspaper. Then he clasped his hands together and lowered his head.

The entire process was done slowly and routinely as though he was really there to pray.

Klein closed his eyes as he silently listened to the bishop's voice in the darkness.

"Lacking clothes and food, they have no covering in the cold.

"They are drenched by rains, and huddle around the rocks for lack of shelter.

"They are orphans snatched from the breast, hope lost on them; they are the poor that have been forced off the proper path.

"The Evernight did not forsake them, but bestowed them with

love [1]."

...

Echoes amplified as they entered his ear. Klein saw a swath of darkness in front of him as he felt his spirit and mind cleansed.

He calmly took it in until the bishop finished his preachings and ended Mass.

After which, the bishop opened a confessional door beside him. Men and women began lining up.

Klein opened his eyes and donned his hat once more. With his cane and newspaper, he stood up and found his place in line.

It was his turn after more than twenty minutes.

He stepped in and closed the door behind him. There was darkness in front of him.

"My child, what do you wish to say?" The bishop's voice sounded from behind the wooden damper screen.

Klein took out the 'Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department' badge from his pocket and handed it over to the bishop through an opening.

"Someone is tailing me. I wish to find Dunn Smith." As though he had been infected by the silent darkness, his tone turned softer as well.

The bishop took the badge and after a few seconds of silence, he said, "Turn right from the confession booth and walk to the end. There will be a secret door to the side. Someone will lead the way after you enter."

As he spoke, he pulled a rope inside the room, causing a particular priest to hear a chime.

Klein retrieved his badge and took off his hat and pressed it to his chest. He gave a slight bow before turning around and exiting.

After confirming that the feeling of being watched was gone, he wore his halved top hat. Without any excessive emotions, he held his cane and turned right, until he arrived by an arched altar.

He found the secret door in the wall facing his side. He silently opened it before sneaking in quickly.

The secret door closed silently as a middle-aged, black-robed priest appeared under the illumination of gas lamps.

"What is it?" the priest asked tersely.

Klein showed his badge and repeated what he said to the bishop.

The middle-aged priest did not ask further questions. He turned around and proceeded forward in silence.

Klein nodded and took off his hat. With his black cane, he followed silently in tow.

Rozanne had once mentioned that heading left from the crossroads towards Chanis Gate would reach Saint Selena Cathedral.

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1. Adapted from Job 24:8, Old Testament.

CHAPTER 26: PRACTICE

Tap! Tap! Tap! The sound of footsteps echoed through the dark, narrow corridor, which was otherwise silent.

Klein kept his back straight as he kept up with the priest's pace. He did not pose questions or chat idly with him, remaining silent like a windless body of water.

After passing through the heavily guarded passageway, the priest opened a secret door with a key and pointed down a stairwell made of stone. "Turn left at the intersection to reach Chanis Gate."

"May Goddess bless you." Klein gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

Commoners practiced etiquette, while the religious partook in ritual blessings.

"Praise the Lady." The priest returned with the same gesture.

Klein did not speak further as he walked down the dark stone stairwell with the aid of the refined inlaid gas lamps on both sides of the wall.

Midway, he subconsciously turned back and saw the priest standing at the entrance. He was in the shadows and appeared like an immobile wax statue.

Klein looked away and continued to proceed down. It did not take long before he hit ground laid with ice-cold stone slabs. This led him to the intersection.

He did not turn towards Chanis Gate because Dunn Smith, who had recently finished his shift, was definitely not there.

He turned right and saw the familiar path. Klein went back up another flight of stairs and appeared inside Blackthorn Security Company.

Seeing doors that were tightly shut or half-closed, he did not rush into them. Instead, he went to the reception and saw a brown-haired girl focused on a magazine with a sweet smile.

"Hi, Rozanne." Klein came to her side and deliberately rapped the table.

Knock! Rozanne stood up suddenly and knocked over a chair and said in a fluster, "Hi, nice weather today. Y-you, Klein, why are you here?"

She patted her chest and heaved a few sighs of relief. She was like a young lady afraid that her father had caught her skiving.

"I need to find Captain," answered Klein simply.

"...You gave me a fright. I thought Captain came out." Rozanne glared at Klein. "Don't you know how to knock!? Hmph, you should be thankful that I'm a tolerant and kind woman. Well, I do prefer the term lady... Is there a reason why you are looking for Captain? He's in the room opposite Mrs. Orianna."

Even though he felt uptight, Klein was so amused by Rozanne he smiled. He pondered for a moment before saying, "A secret."

"..." Rozanne's eyes widened and while she reeled in her disbelief, Klein did a slight bow before bidding her farewell.

He went through the reception's partition and knocked on the door of the first office on the right.

"Come in." Dunn Smith's deep and gentle voice sounded.

Klein pushed the door and opened before closing the door behind him. He took off his hat and bowed. "Good morning, Captain."

"Good morning, how can I help you?" Dunn's black trench coat and hat were hanging on a clothes stand to his side. He was dressed in a white shirt and black vest. Even though his hairline was rather high, his gray eyes were deep, and he appeared much fresher.

"Someone is following me." Klein honestly answered without any embellishments.

Dunn leaned back and clasped his hands together. His deep gray eyes silently looked at Klein's eyes. He did not follow up on the topic of being followed and instead, asked, "You came from the cathedral?"

"Yes." Klein answered.

Dunn nodded gently. He did not comment on its merits or demerits as he switched the subject back. "It might be that Welch's father doesn't believe the cause of death that we reported and had hired a private investigator from Wind City to investigate the matter."

Midseashire's Constant City was also known as Wind City. It was a region with extremely advanced coal and steel industries. It was one of the top three cities of Loen Kingdom.

Before waiting for Klein to give his opinion, Dunn continued, "It might also be a result of that notebook. Heh, we happened to be investigating where Welch received the Antigonus family's notebook. Of course, we can't eliminate other people or organizations that might be seeking out this notebook." "What should I do?" Klein asked in a serious voice.

Without a question, he hoped that it was the first reason.

Dunn did not immediately answer him. He raised his coffee mug and took a mouthful, his eyes not showing the sliver of a ripple. "Return the way you came, then do anything you wish." "Anything?" Klein returned with a question.

"Anything." Dunn nodded with certainty. "Of course, do not scare them off or violate the law."

"Alright." Klein took a deep breath and bade him farewell. He left the room and went back underground.

He turned left at the intersection, and bathed in the light from the gas lamps on the two walls, he arrived silently to the empty, dark, and cold passageway.

The sound of his footsteps echoed, making him sound more alone and terrified.

Soon, Klein arrived at the stairwell. He went forward and saw a shadow standing there—the middle-aged priest.

The two did not say a word when they met. The priest turned around in silence and made way.

He proceeded silently before returning to the prayer hall. The circular holes behind the arched altar were still as pure and bright, while the darkness and silence of the building's interior remained. There were still men and women lining outside the confessional, but much fewer than before.

After waiting for a moment, Klein slowly left the prayer hall with his cane and newspaper as though nothing had ever happened, successfully leaving Saint Selena Cathedral.

The moment he walked out, he saw the burning sun. He immediately regained the familiar feeling of being observed. He felt like he was prey being eyed by a hawk.

Suddenly, a question surfaced in his mind.

Why didn't the "observer" follow me into the cathedral? Although I could have still used the dark environment and the priest to conceal my temporary disappearance, would it be hard for him to continue monitoring me by pretending to pray? If he had not done something wrong, there would be

no problem walking in with an open and aboveboard manner, right? Unless the person has some dark history, making him afraid of the Church or fear the bishop, knowing that he might have the powers of a Beyonder.

In that case, the likelihood of it being a private investigator is very slim... Klein exhaled and no longer acted as nervous as he was previously. He took a casual stroll before going around and to the back of Zouteland Street.

He stopped at an ancient-styled building with mottled walls. The address on the door was '3.' Its name was the Zouteland Shooting Club.

Part of the police department's underground shooting range was opened to the public as a way to earn some additional funds.

Klein went in and the feeling of being watched vanished instantly. He took this opportunity to hand over his Special Operations Department badge to the attendant.

After a short verification, he was led underground to a small, confined shooting range.

"Ten-meter target." Klein informed the attendant simply. Next, he retrieved the revolver from his underarm holster and the box of brass bullets from his pocket.

The feeling of being suddenly targeted made his desire to protect himself win over his procrastination. Therefore, he could not wait to come over to practice his shooting.

Pa! After the attendant left, he flicked open the cylinder and removed the silver demon hunting bullets. Following that, he filled the cylinder with normal brass bullets.

This time, neither did he leave an empty spot to prevent misfiring, nor did he take off his formal attire and halved top hat. He planned on practicing in his usual getup. After all, it was impossible for him to shout "wait a minute, let me change into something more comfortable" after encountering an enemy or danger.

Click! Klein closed the cylinder and rolled it with his thumb.

Suddenly, he held the gun in both hands, raised it up straight, and aimed at the target more than ten meters away.

However, he was in no hurry to shoot. Instead, he recalled his experience at military training [1], how to form a line with the iron-sights, and knowledge about a gun's recoil.

Rustle! Rustle! While his clothes rustled, Klein repeated his aiming and his holding stance. He was as serious as a student taking a high-school exam.

After repeating it several times, he retreated to the wall and sat down on a long, soft bench. He placed the revolver to the side, began massaging his arms, and rested for quite a while.

He spent a few minutes recalling his practice before he picked up the revolver with the wooden handle and bronze cylinder. He got into standard firing position and pulled the trigger.

Bang! His arm trembled as his body moved back from the recoil. The bullet missed the target.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Drawing from the experience he gained, he shot again and again until all six rounds were finished.

I'm starting to hit the target... Klein stepped back and sat down again as he exhaled.

Click! He swung the cylinder out and allowed the six shells to fall to the ground. Then, without a change in expression, he inserted the remaining brass rounds in.

After relaxing his arm, Klein stood up again and returned to his shooting position.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Ringing shots echoed as the target shook. Klein practiced and rested repeatedly. He expended all thirty normal rounds and the remaining five from before. He gradually hit the target and started aiming for the bull's eye.

He swung his sore shoulders and threw out the final five shells. He lowered his head and inserted the demon hunting bullets with the complicated patterns back into the gun, leaving an empty spot to prevent misfiring.

After putting the revolver back into his underarm holster, Klein patted the dust from his body and walked out the shooting range to return to the streets.

The feeling of being observed arose once again. Klein felt calmer than he previously felt as he slowly walked to Champagne Street. He spent four pence on a tracked carriage to return to Iron Cross Street before returning to his own apartment.

The feeling of being spied upon vanished without a trace. Klein took out his keys and opened the door to see a short-haired man nearing his thirties and wearing a linen shirt seated at a desk.

His heart tensed up before relaxing immediately. Klein greeted with a smile, "Good morning—no—good afternoon, Benson."

This man was none other than Klein's and Melissa's elder brother, Benson Moretti. He was only twenty-five this year, but his receding hairline and decrepit appearance made him look nearly thirty.

He had black hair and brown eyes, resembling Klein somewhat, but he lacked the faint scholarly air which Klein had.

"Good afternoon, Klein. How was the interview?" Benson stood up as he grinned.

His black coat and halved top hat were hanging on a protrusion of their bunk bed.

"Horrible," Klein replied in a deadpan manner.

When he saw Benson stunned, Klein chuckled and added, "In fact, I didn't even participate in the interview. I found a job ahead of the interview and it pays three pounds a week..." He repeated what he told Melissa again.

Benson's expression calmed down as he shook his head with a laugh. "It feels like I'm seeing a child grow up... Well, this job is pretty good." He sighed and said, "It's great that the first thing I heard is such good news after being away for work. Let's celebrate tonight and buy some beef?"

Klein smiled. "Sure, but I believe Melissa will feel the pinch. Let's buy some ingredients later in the afternoon? Let's bring at least three soli? Well, to be honest, a pound exchanges for twenty soli, and one soli exchanges for twelve pence. There are even denominations like the halfpence and quarterpence. Such a coin system just goes against logic. It's so troublesome. I think it must be one of the most foolish coin systems in the world."

When he said that, he saw Benson's expression turn stern. Feeling a little unease, he wondered if he had said anything wrong.

Could it be that in the lost memory fragments of the original Klein, Benson was an outright, extreme nationalist who showed no tolerance for any negativity? Benson took a few steps and refuted him with a stern expression. "No, it is not one of, but the most foolish coin system."

Not one of! Klein was taken aback, but he quickly snapped to his senses. He looked at his brother in the eye and laughed.

Indeed, Benson was great at mocking humor.

Benson lifted the corners of his lips and said in all seriousness, “You should understand that to institute a reasonable and simple coin system, one needs to know how to count and grasp the decimal system. Unfortunately, there are too few talents among those important figures.”

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1. This does not mean Zhou Mingrui was a soldier. Students in China are made to attend short military stints during their schooling days for short periods of time.

It's simply sharp and incisive... Klein burst out in laughter. Using the rich experience he had from his previous incarnation, he added another insult. "In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that those important figures have any brains at all."

"Good! Very good!" Benson roared with laughter as he gave a thumbs up. "Klein, you are a lot more humorous than before."

After taking a breath, he continued, "I have to go to the pier in the afternoon. I'm only off work tomorrow. After that I'll have time... to go to Tingen City Housing Improvement Company with the both of you. Let's see if they have cheap and good terrace houses for rent. Also, I need to pay Mr. Franky a visit."

"Our landlord?" the perplexed Klein asked. *Does our current landlord have some terrace houses from pretty good districts under his name?*

Benson shot his brother a glance and said, amused, "Have you forgotten the one-year rental contract we have with him? It has only been six months."

"Hiss..." Klein immediately drew a gasp of cold air.

He had really forgotten the matter!

Although rent was paid once a week, the lease was a year long. If they were to move now, it was equivalent to a breach in contract. If they were taken to court, they would have to compensate large sums of money!

"You are still lacking in societal experience." Benson touched his receding black hairline and said wistfully, "This was a clause I fought so hard back then. If not, Mr. Franky was only willing to lease it to us for three months each contract. To those with money, landlords would sign leases for a year, two years, or even three years to seek stable income. But for us—the past us—and our neighbors, landlords would have to be constantly worried that something bad might happen, depriving them of their rent. Therefore, they would only sign short-term contracts.

"In that case, they can offer to raise prices according to the situation." Klein summarized and added, using the original Klein's memories and his own experience as a tenant.

Benson sighed and said, "This is the cruel reality of today's society. Alright, you don't have to worry. The issue with the contract can be easily resolved. To be frank, even if we owe him a week's rent, Mr. Franky would have immediately thrown us out and confiscated whatever valuable items we have. After all, his intelligence is below that of a curly-haired baboon's. There's no way he can comprehend overly complicated matters."

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly recalled a particular Sir Humphrey's meme. He shook his head and said seriously, "No, Benson. You are wrong."

"Why?" Benson was puzzled.

"Mr. Franky's intelligence is still slightly higher than a baboon's," Klein replied in all seriousness. Just as Benson seemed to smile in response, he added, "If he is on form."

"Haha." Benson lost it and burst out in laughter.

After a series of rapturous laughter, he pointed at Klein, momentarily unable to put his thoughts in words. Only then, he returned to the topic at hand.

"Of course, as a gentleman, we cannot employ such shameless tactics. I will discuss this with Mr. Franky tomorrow. Believe me, he's easily convinced, easily."

Klein had no doubts regarding Benson's point. The existence of the gas pipes was excellent proof.

After some idle chatter between the brothers, the remnants of pan-fried fish from the previous night were made into a soup with some vegetables. During the boiling process, the steam moistened the rye bread.

Smearing a little butter on the bread, Klein and Benson had a simple meal, but they were very satisfied with it. After all the fragrance and sweetness of butter brought them endless aftertastes.

After Benson left, Klein headed to the Lettuce and Meat market with three Soli notes and some spare pennies. He spent six pence on a pound of beef and seven pence on a fresh and succulent fish with few bones. Additionally, he bought potatoes, peas, radishes, rhubarbs, lettuce, and turnips, as well as spices such as rosemary, basil, cumin, and cooking oils.

During this entire time, he continued to feel like he was being watched, but there was no physical interaction.

After spending some time at Smyrin Bakery, Klein returned home and began weight-lifting with heavier items such as books to train his arm strength.

He had planned to exercise by military boxing, which he learned from his compulsory military stint for students. However, he had already forgotten the radio exercise routines from school, much less boxing which was only taught during the military stints. Exasperated, he could only do something simpler.

Klein did not overexert himself since it would lead to fatigue and thus put him in greater danger. He took an appropriate break and began reading the original Klein's notes and study material. He wished to read anything regarding the Fourth Epoch again.

...

In the evening, Benson and Melissa sat in front of a desk. The food was placed neatly like children in upper primary school.

The fragrances of the dishes were composed of a rich melody of scents—the soul captivating fragrance of the stewed beef, the obviously tender potatoes, the sweetness of the thick pea soup, the mellow flavors of the stewed rhubarb, and the sweetness of the buttered rye bread.

Benson gulped a mouthful of saliva as he turned around to see Klein placing a crispy fish onto a plate. He felt the fragrance of the oil permeate through his nostrils into his throat and then into his stomach.

Groan! His stomach made a distinct protest.

Klein rolled up his sleeves and held up a plate of fried fish before placing it in the middle of the tidied desk. Following that, he returned to the cupboard and took out two large cups of ginger beer and placed them where he and Benson sat.

He smiled at Melissa and took out a lemon pudding as if he were performing a magic trick. "We'll have beer, while you'll have this."

"...Thank you." Melissa took the lemon pudding.

When Benson saw this, he raised his cup and said with a smile, "This is to celebrate Klein's finding of a decent job."

Klein raised his cup and clinked it with Benson before clinking it with Melissa's lemon pudding. "Praise the Lady!"

Gulp. He tilted his head back and drank it down. The spicy feeling warmed his gullet, bringing him great aftertastes.

Despite its name, ginger beer did not contain any alcohol. It was a mixture of the ginger's spiciness and the sourness of lemon that made it taste similar to beer. It was a kind of beverage that both women and children found acceptable. However, Melissa did not like the taste of it.

“Praise the Lady!” Benson drank a mouthful as well while Melissa took a nibble of the lemon pudding. She chewed at it repeatedly before swallowing it down unwillingly.

“Give it a try.” Klein put down his cup and picked up his fork and spoon and pointed at the tableful of food.

He was most pessimistic of his thick pea soup. After all, he had never eaten something so strange on Earth. All he could do was adapt the recipe from the original Klein’s memory fragments.

As the eldest brother, Benson did not stand on ceremony as he dug up a spoonful of mashed potatoes and stuffed it into his mouth.

The beaten potatoes were boiled thoroughly and mixed with the faint taste of lard and just enough salt. It whetted his appetite and made him salivate.

“Not... bad... Not bad,” praised Benson vaguely. “It’s much more delicious than the one I had back at work. They only used butter.”

This is one of my specialties after all... Klein accepted the praise. “It’s all thanks to the teachings of the chef at Welch’s place.”

Melissa looked at the beef soup. The green basil leaves, the green lettuce heads, and the radishes were submerged in the colorless soup, covering the tender beef. The soup was clear and its fragrance tantalizing.

She forked a piece of beef and placed it in her mouth to chew. The beef retained a little chewiness despite being stewed tender. The mixture of salt, the sweetness from the radishes, and the spiciness from the basil leaves complemented the deliciousness of the beef.

“...” She seemed to give her approbation, but she could not stop her chewing.

Klein tasted it and felt that although it was delicious, it was not without regret. This was still far from his usual standard. After all, he was lacking in certain condiments and could only use replacements. It was no wonder it tasted different.

Of course, even with the best standards, one could only make do with the dishes they cooked personally.

Suddenly, his heart pained for Benson and Melissa who were stunted in their world view.

After swallowing a piece of beef, Klein picked up a piece of fried Tussock Fish which was sprinkled with cumin and rosemary. It was crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. The char was a perfect golden brown and the saltiness and oil fragrance intertwined as one.

Nodding slightly, Klein tried a piece of stewed rhubarb and found it palatable. It got rid of the cloyed taste of meat.

Finally, he mustered his courage and scooped a bowl of thick pea soup.

Too sweet and too sour... Klein could not help but frown.

However, after seeing Benson and Melissa looking satisfied from tasting it, he began suspecting his tastes. He could not help but down a mouthful of ginger beer to cleanse his tongue.

The siblings were stuffed by the end of the meal. They laid slumped in the chairs for quite a while.

“Let us praise the Lady once more!” Benson raised his ginger beer —which had only one mouthful left—as he said in satisfaction.

“Praise the Lady!” Klein downed the last bit of his beverage. “Praise the Lady.” Melissa finally put the last bit of lemon pudding into her mouth and enjoyed the flavors swishing through her mouth.

When Klein saw this, he took advantage of his tipsiness and smiled. “Melissa, that’s not right. You should eat the thing you find most delicious at the beginning. That way, you can fully appreciate its most delicious aspects. Tasting it when you are filled and satiated will not do the food justice.”

“No, it’s still as delicious as it can be,” answered Melissa firmly and stubbornly.

The siblings had a happy chat, and after digesting their meals, they cleaned up the plates, cutlery, and stored the oil which was used to fry the fish.

After busying themselves, it was revision time. One refreshed his accounting knowledge while another continued reading the study material and notes. Time was spent to its fullest.

At eleven, the siblings extinguished the gas lamp and went to bed after washing up.

...

Klein felt groggy as he stared at the darkness in front of him. A figure wearing a black trench coat and halved top hat appeared suddenly in Klein’s vision. It was Dunn Smith.

“Captain!” Klein jolted awake and knew he was dreaming.

Dunn’s gray eyes remained calm, as though he was mentioning something trivial. “Someone has sneaked into your room. Pick up your revolver and force him to the corridor. Leave the rest to us.”

Someone has sneaked into my room? The observer has finally taken action? Klein jumped in fright, but did not dare ask further. All he did was nod and say, “Alright!”

The scene before his eyes changed immediately as a swath of colors appeared like the bursting of bubbles.

Klein’s eyes opened as he carefully turned his head. He looked toward the window and saw a thin but unfamiliar back standing at his desk, rummaging for something in silence.

Badump! Badump! Badump!

Klein's heart began beating rapidly. It shrank into a clump before expanding abruptly. It made his body tremble gently.

There was an instant when he nearly forgot what he had to do until the lurking figure suddenly paused. The figure pricked his ears slightly as though listening for any changes.

Blood flowed back from his brain as Klein regained his basic cognitive abilities. He reached beneath the pillow for the wooden grip of the revolver.

He felt the firm but smooth feeling as he rapidly calmed down. He silently and slowly pulled out the revolver and aimed it at the trespasser's head.

To be honest, he had no confidence in striking the intruder. Although he was already able to stably hit the target during practice, a moving person and a fixed target were completely different. He was not arrogant enough to confound the two together.

However, he vaguely remembered something from his previous life; the general idea was that a nuclear weapon wielded the greatest strength before its launch.

The principle held in his current situation. The best deterrence was before he shot!

By not pulling the trigger or shooting blindly, the intruder was unable to determine whether or not he was a complete rookie who had an extremely high chance of missing him. His worries and fears would make him deliberate more, resulting in him restraining himself!

In an instant, another thought arose in him. It immediately made Klein turn decisive. He was not the kind of person who turned calmer when faced with danger; instead, he had already imagined the situation when he faced the observer—using intimidation instead of attacking.

The Foodaholic Empire had an idiom: Where there is precaution there will be no danger!

When Klein pointed his gun at the intruder, the thin man froze suddenly, as though he had sensed something.

Following that, he heard a voice that hid a chuckle.

"Good evening, Sir."

The scrawny man clasped both his hands together, and his body seemed to tense. Klein sat on the lower bunk, aimed the person's head with the revolver, and tried to speak as leisurely and as naturally as he could.

"Please raise both of your hands and turn around. Try to do it slow. To be frank, I am very timid and I get nervous easily. If you move too quickly, I can be frightened, and I can't guarantee that there won't be a situation where I misfire. Yes, that's right."

The scrawny man raised both of his hands and held them up near his head before turning his body bit by bit. The first thing that came into view was a black tight suit with neat buttons. Next, he caught a pair of brown eyebrows that were thick and sharp.

The intruder's deep blue eyes didn't reflect fear, but rather gazed upon Klein with the intensity of a ferocious beast. It seemed that if Klein were careless for a second, the other person would leap forward and tear him to pieces.

He clenched the handle tightly as he tried his best to appear calm and indifferent.

It was only when the thin man faced him completely did Klein jerk his chin towards the door. He softly and gently said, "Sir, let's take this outside. Do not disturb the beautiful dreams of others. Oh, do keep your motions slow. Lighten your footsteps a little too. It's basic courtesy for a gentleman."

The thin man's cold pupils rolled as he swept Klein a glance. He continued raising his hands as he walked slowly to the door.

Under the revolver's aim, he twisted the handle and slowly opened the door.

When the door was half-opened, he suddenly lowered himself and rolled forward. The door was pulled by a strong wind and it closed with a slam.

"Uh..." Benson, who was on the top bunk, was stirred. He almost woke up in a daze.

At that moment, a leisurely and serene melody entered from outside. The heavy and comfortable voice started to sing.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies [1]..."

The poem seemed to possess the power to calm and relax others. Benson, who was on the top bunk, and Melissa, who was in another room, again fell asleep amid their grogginess.

Klein's body and mind was also peaceful and quiet. He nearly yawned.

The way the thin man had darted off was so agile that he could not react in time.

Looking at the closed door, he smiled and muttered to himself. "You might not believe it, but pulling the trigger would not release a round."

The empty chamber to prevent misfiring!

Following that, Klein listened to the midnight poem as he patiently awaited for the battle outside to end.

Within a minute, the tranquil melody which resembled the reflection of moonlight on the surface of a lake stopped, and the dark night resumed its deep silence.

Klein silently spun the cylinder and moved the empty chamber away as he awaited for the outcome.

He uneasily waited for a full ten minutes. Just as he wondered if he should investigate, he heard Dunn Smith's staid and warm voice from the door.

"It's settled."

Phew. Klein exhaled. He held his revolver and took his key. Barefooted, he carefully approached the door before silently opening it to see the black trench coat and the halved top hat. Dunn Smith was standing there with his deep and calm gray eyes.

He closed the door behind him and followed Dunn to the end of the corridor and stood amid the weak crimson moonlight.

"It took me some time to enter his dream," said Dunn calmly as he looked at the red moon outside the window.

"Do you know his background?" Klein felt a lot more relieved.

Dunn nodded and said, "An ancient organization known as the Secret Order. They were established in the Fourth Epoch and are related to the Solomon Empire and a number of fallen aristocrats of that period. Heh, the Antigonus family's diary came from them. Due to a member's negligence, it entered the antique market and was obtained by Welch. They had no choice but to send people in search of it."

Without waiting for Klein's question, he paused before continuing.

"We will capture the remaining members they have according to the clues. Well, it might not end too well. These fellows are as good at hiding as the rats in the sewers. But at the very least, they would believe that we have likely obtained the Antigonus family's notebook or that we have obtained a critical clue. In that case, as long as it's not something extremely crucial or important, they would abandon the operation. That is their philosophy on surviving."

"...What if the notebook is extremely crucial and important?" asked Klein worriedly.

Dunn smiled without an answer. Instead, he said, "We know very little of the Secret Order. Our success this time is all thanks to your sharp wits. This contribution is all yours. In light of the possibility of hidden dangers and how heightened perception would aid in finding the notebook, you have a chance at choosing."

"A chance at choosing?" Klein vaguely guessed something as his breathing subconsciously turned heavy.

Dunn wiped the smile from his face as he said in all seriousness, "Do you wish to become a Beyonder? You can only choose the starting Sequence of an incomplete Sequence.

"Of course, you can give up this chance and choose to accumulate the merit you have garnered. Then, all you have to do is wait till there's sufficient room for you to become a

Sleepless, which is also the first, complete Sequence the Goddess has bestowed on the Nighthawks."

Indeed... Klein felt delighted and did not have any hesitant emotions. He took the initiative to ask, "Then from which of the Sequence 9s can I choose from?"

I have to have detailed information to decide whether to give up or accept, as well as choose which one!

Dunn turned around and seemed to be cloaked in the crimson veil that shone down on him. He looked into Klein's eyes and said slowly, "Apart from the Sleepless, the Church has three Sequence 9 potion formulas. One of them is Mystery Pryer, which is also the power Old Neil controls. Heh, Rozanne has likely mentioned this to you. She can never hold her tongue."

Klein smiled awkwardly, at a loss for an answer. Thankfully, Dunn did not mind it as he continued. "Our Mystery Pryer potion formula and the later Sequences that aren't directly chained were obtained from the Moses Ascetic Order. Back then, it was said that they had yet to fall to corruption. They persisted in their morals and precepts, determined in their pursuit of knowledge. They kept their secrets strictly confidential. Anyone that entered the order would be barred from speaking for five years after becoming a Mystery Pryer. They would learn to keep silent, so as to cultivate and enhance their focus. The maxim of the Moses Ascetic Order—do as you wish, but do no harm— began from them.

"Mystery Pryers have a comprehensive but rudimentary understanding and grasp of magic, witchcraft,

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astrology, and other mystical knowledge. They also know a fair number of magical rituals, but they can easily sense certain existences that hide among matter. Therefore, they have to be careful and show respect to their powers as a Beyonder.

"We lack a large portion of this Sequence, causing it to be an incomplete chain. For example, its Sequence 8. Of course, perhaps the Holy Cathedral has it."

This pretty much meets all my requirements... Klein nodded slightly, to the point of having the urge to choose.

Thankfully, he still remembered certain things.

"What about the other two?"

"The second type is named Corpse Collector. Quite a number of cultists who worship Death in the Southern Continent choose it. After consuming the potion, unintelligent dead spirits would mistake

them as one of their kind and not attack them. They would gain resistance to the cold, decay, and corrosiveness of cadaveric auras. They will be able to directly see a portion of evil spirits and see the characteristics and weaknesses of undead creatures, as well as gain certain attribute enhancements. We have the Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 that follows it. Heh heh, you probably can guess Sequence 7—Spirit Medium! This was chosen by Daly back then," described Dun in detail.

Spirit Medium does appear mysterious and cool, but what I want most is to grasp knowledge of mysticism... Klein did not interject; all he did was listen quietly.

Dunn Smith looked sideways at the crimson moon and said, "We only have Sequence 9 of the third type. Whether the Holy

Cathedral has it, I'm not sure. It's called Seer."

Seer? Klein's pupils constricted as he recalled the regret Emperor Roselle had left in his diary: He regretted not choosing Apprentice, Marauder, or Seer!

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1. Adapted from the English translation of Rubáiyát.

Klein tried his best to remain his usual self as he asked with genuine interest, "What abilities do Seers have?"

"Your question is inaccurate; the question should be, 'what abilities does consuming the Seer potion give?'" Dunn Smith shook his head and chuckled. His gray pupils and face turned away from the moon as his features hid in the shadows. "There are many kinds of things involved—astromancy, cartomancy, spiritual pendulums, and scrying. Of course, it does not mean that consuming the potion will immediately allow you to grasp all of them. The potion only equips you with the qualifications and ability to learn it.

"As they lack direct means of fighting enemies, heh. You can probably imagine that setting up a magical ritual requires a lot of preparation. It's not suitable for combat. Therefore, in terms of knowledge of mysticism, a Seer will be more learned and professional than a Mystery Pryer."

It sounds like it matches my requirements as well... However, the lack of means to directly deal with enemies is quite a dilemma... Furthermore, the Church of Evernight likely doesn't have the subsequent Sequences... The Holy Cathedral likely refers to the headquarters, the Cathedral of Serenity... The means available to low-Sequence Beyonders against their enemies might not be comparable to firearms... Klein fell into deep thought as he racked his brains. He kept going back and forth between Mystery Pryers and Seers. He no longer considered Corpse Collector.

Dunn Smith smiled when he saw this.

"You don't have to rush into a decision. Tell me your answer Monday morning. Regardless of your choice of Sequence or giving up this opportunity, none of us from the Nighthawks would have any other thoughts on the matter.

"Calm down and ask your heart."

With that said, he took off his hat and bowed slightly. He slowly walked past Klein and headed for the stairwell.

Klein did not say a word and did not immediately reply. He silently bowed and watched as Dunn left.

Although he was constantly hoping to become a Beyonder previously, he was thrown into a dilemma when the opportunity arose; the subsequent missing Sequences, Beyonders having the risk of losing control, the believability of Emperor Roselle's diaries, and the illusory murmurs that could corrupt people into madness all mixed together and formed a moat that obstructed his advancement.

He took a deep breath and slowly breathed out.

"No matter how bad it is, it can't be worse than making an eighteen-year-old high-school student decide on his future career..." Klein gave a self-deprecating chuckle. Gathering his scattered thoughts, his opened the door softly and laid back on the bed.

He laid there with his eyes open, silently looking at the bottom of the top bunk that was dyed with the faint crimson of the moon.

A drunkard staggered outside the window as a carriage sped down the empty streets. These noises did not break the serenity of the night but instead made it even darker and more distant.

Klein's emotions settled down as he recalled his past on Earth. He recalled how he liked exercising, his father who always spoke loudly, his mother who enjoyed busying herself despite having a chronic disease, his friends who grew up with him, going from playing sports like soccer and basketball to games and mahjong, as well as the person he made a failed confession to... These were like a silent river; it did not have many ripples or deep sentimental feelings, but it silently drowned his heart.

Perhaps one will only learn to cherish things after they have lost them. When the crimson receded and the sky turned goldenyellow from the flaming ball's illumination, Klein had made his choice.

...

He got out of bed and headed to the public bathroom to wash his face to wake himself up. Then, he took a one-soli note to Mrs. Wendy's to buy eight pounds of rye bread with nine pence, replenishing the staple food that had been consumed the previous night.

"The price of bread has begun stabilizing..." He commented after breakfast as Benson changed.

It was Sunday, so both he and Melissa finally had the chance to rest.

Klein, who was already in proper attire, was sitting on a chair and flipping through the outdated newspapers he brought back from yesterday. He said in surprise, "There's a house for rent here: North Borough's 3 Wendel Street, a bungalow with two floors. There are six bedrooms, three bathrooms, and two big balconies upstairs. Downstairs, there's a dining hall, a living room, a kitchen, two bathrooms, and two guest rooms, as well as an underground cellar... In front of the house are two acres of private land and there's a small garden behind. It can be rented for one, two, or three years, with a weekly rent of one pound six soli. Those interested can head to Champagne Street and look for Mr. Gusev."

"That's our goal for the future." Benson wore his black halved top hat as he smiled to say, "The rent for the places in newspapers is usually a little too expensive. The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company has options that do not pale in

comparison to that for cheaper."

"Why are we not searching in the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class?" Melissa walked out from her room holding an old, veiled hat. She had changed into a grayishwhite long dress that had been mended several times.

She was silent and introverted, but that could not mask her youthfulness.

Benson laughed.

"Where did you hear of the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class? Jenny? Mrs. Rochelle? Or is it from your good friend Selena?"

Melissa looked to the side and whispered a reply, "Mrs. Rochelle... While washing up last night, I happened to meet her. She asked me about Klein's interview and I told her roughly what happened. Then, she suggested I find the Tingen Housing

Improvement Association for the Working Class."

Benson noticed Klein's puzzled expression and shook his head in amusement.

"They are targeted at the poor. Well, a precise description is that they are a housing association for the lower strata of society. They build and renovate houses that basically have communal bathrooms. They only provide three choices—a single, double or triple bedroom. Do you wish to continue living in such an environment?

"The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is in the same business as them, but they also provide choices for the lowermiddle class. To be honest, we are a little better than the lowermiddle class, but we are still quite worse off than true middleclass families. It's not a matter of salary; it's just that we did not have the time to save up."

Klein came to a realization as he put away the newspaper. Picking up his top hat, he stood up.

"Then, let's set off."

"I remember that the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is on Daffodil Street," Benson said as he opened the door. "They are like the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class, known as Five Percent Charities. Do you know why?"

"I don't know." Klein raised his cane and walked to Melissa's side.

The girl with black hair that reached down her back nodded.

Benson headed out and said, “These kinds of housing improvement associations or companies were established as a result of Backlund. They are funded in three ways: One, by requesting donations from charitable foundations. Two, through funding proposals. They receive grants from the government’s commission at a special rate of 4%. Third, through investments. By taking a portion of the rent received, they will give their investors 5% returns. That’s why they are called Five Percent Charities.”

The siblings went down the stairs and slowly walked toward Daffodil Street. They decided to confirm a place before talking to their present landlord, Mr. Franky. They did not want to be in a situation where they were forced to move when they had no place to stay.

“I heard from Selena that there are housing improvement companies that are purely run as charities?” Melissa asked in thought.

Benson chuckled.

“There are, such as the Deweyville Trust which Sir Deweyville donated money to establish. He builds apartments targeted for the working class. He also provides dedicated estate management personnel while only charging rather low rent. However, the criteria for applying is very strict.”

“It sounds like you aren’t fond of the idea?” Klein acutely sensed it as he asked with a smile.

“No, I respect Sir Deweyville a lot, but I’m certain he does not know what true poverty is. Staying in his apartment is like a priest giving hope. It’s not very pragmatic. For instance, tenants have to receive the main vaccines and they have to take turns cleaning the bathroom. They are unable to sublease their apartments or use it for commercial activities. They aren’t allowed to throw their rubbish wantonly and children are prevented from playing in the corridors. Goddess, does he wish to make everyone ladies and gentlemen?” Benson answered in his usual tone.

Klein creased his brows in doubt.

“Doesn’t sound problematic. Those are all very reasonable

criteria.”

“Yeah.” Melissa nodded in agreement.

Benson cocked his head and looked at them before chuckling.

“Perhaps I have protected both of you too well that you have not seen actual poverty. Do you think they would have the money for the main vaccines? The line for free charitable organization sets them back three months.

“Do you think their work is stable and not temporary? If they cannot sublet parts of their apartment to receive some extra income, are they to move out when they lose their jobs? Besides, many ladies mend clothes or make match boxes at home to maintain their livelihood. Those are included as commercial activities. Are you going to chase them all out?

“Most of the poor use all their efforts to survive. Do you think they have the time to discipline their children and stop them from running along the corridors? Perhaps they can only be locked at home until they’re old enough, then sending them to places that accept child labor when they are around seven or eight years old.”

Ben did not use many adjectives to describe the matter; it caused Klein to shudder a little.

This was how people from low socioeconomic classes lived?

Beside him, Melissa fell into silence. It took a long while before she said in an ethereal tone,

“Jenny no longer wished for me to visit her after she moved to the Lower Street.”

“Let’s hope her father gets back on his feet after that injury and finds a stable job. However, I have seen too many alcoholics use alcohol to numb themselves...” Benson laughed with a somber tone.

Klein was at a loss for words. Melissa seemed to be the same. As such, the siblings walked silently down Daffodil Street and found Tingen City Housing Improvement Company.

The person who served them was a middle-aged man with an amiable smile. He did not wear a formal attire or a hat, but instead, wore a white shirt and black vest.

“You can call me Scarter. Might I know what kind of house you have in mind?” When he caught a glance at Klein’s silver-inlaid cane, his smile widened.

Klein looked at Benson, who was better with words, and gestured for him to answer.

Benson directly answered, “A terrace house.”

Scarter flipped through the files and documents in his hand before smiling.

“There are currently five that haven’t been rented out. To be honest, we are geared more to serving customers—laborers and their children who have housing difficulties where six, eight, or even ten or twelve people squeeze into a house. There aren’t many terrace houses. There’s one at 2 Daffodil Street, one in the North Borough, one in the East Borough... The weekly rent goes from 12 to 16 soli. You can take a look at the detailed introductions here.”

He handed over a document to Benson, Klein, and Melissa.

After reading through it, the siblings exchanged looks and pointed to the same spot on the piece of paper simultaneously.

“Let’s take a look at 2 Daffodil Street first,” said Benson. Klein and Melissa nodded in response.

This place was a district they were familiar with.

2, 4, and 6 Daffodil Street were terrace buildings with multifaceted hipped roofs. Their exteriors were painted grayish blue, and three chimneys stood erected.

The place obviously did not have lawns, gardens, or porches. The entrances directly faced the street.

Tingen City Housing Improvement Company's Scarter took out a bunch of keys and while opening the door, introduced, "Our terrace houses do not have foyers, so you enter directly into the living room. There's an oriel window facing Daffodil Street, so there's pretty good lighting..."

Klein, Benson, and Melissa were greeted by a fabric sofa bathing in the golden rays of the sun, and an area more spacious than their previous two-bedroom apartment.

"This living room can be used as a guest hall. To its right is the dining room and on the left is a fireplace that will keep you warm in winter." Scarter pointed around with great familiarity.

Klein looked around and confirmed that it was a crude, openstyle concept. The dining room and the living room were not separated by any partitions, but they were also far from the oriel window, making those spots rather dim.

There was a rectangular red wooden table surrounded by six hardwood chairs with soft cushions. The fireplace on the left wall looked exactly like the ones in foreign movies and TV series that Klein used to watch.

"Behind the dining area is the kitchen, but we do not provide any appliances. Opposite to the living room is a small guest room and a bathroom..." Scarter walked around and described the remaining layout of the house.

The bathroom was separated into two parts. The outer area was where one would wash their face and brush their teeth, while the inner area was the toilet. There was an accordion door that separated them. The guest room was described to be small, but it was as big as the room that Melissa currently stayed in. She was stunned at the sight.

After looking around the first floor, Scarter brought the three siblings to the stairway next to the bathroom.

"Down below is the underground cellar. It is quite stuffy downstairs, so you must remember to let some fresh air in first before entering."

Benson nodded casually and followed Scarter to the second floor.

"On my left, there's a bathroom. On the same side, there are an additional two bedrooms. It's the same layout on my right, but the washroom on this side is next to the balcony."

As he spoke, Scarter opened the bathroom door and stood sideways so that he would not obstruct Klein, Benson, and Melissa from looking in.

The bathroom had an extra bathtub. Like the other bathroom, there was an accordion door next to the toilet. Although it was a little dusty, it wasn't dirty, smelly, or cramped.

Melissa looked in a daze until Scarter walked to the bedroom next to it. Only then did she stop looking and follow the rest slowly.

She took another few steps before looking back.

Klein, who was experienced in life, was delighted and excited as well. Even though their landlord often supervised their cleaning up of the bathroom, it still was not clean enough. It was often nauseating, let alone the fact that they would easily encounter a line when they needed to relieve themselves.

The other bathroom was similar. One of the four bedrooms was slightly bigger and was furnished with a bookcase. The rest were about the same size as each other and had a bed, table, and wardrobe.

“The balcony is very tiny, so you won’t be able to dry too many clothes in the sun at a time.” Scarter stood at the end of the corridor and pointed to a spot with a door and lock. “There is a complete underground drainage, gas piping, meter, and other facilities. It is very suitable for you gentlemen and a lady like yourselves. It only requires thirteen soli of rent and five pence for use of the furniture weekly. In addition, there is a deposit that amounts to four weeks of rent.”

Without waiting for Benson to say a word, Klein looked around and asked curiously, “Roughly how much would it cost to buy the house?”

As a transmigrator from the Foodaholic Empire, the desire to buy property still existed within him.

Upon hearing that question, Benson and Melissa were shocked. They looked at Klein as though they were seeing a monster.

Scarter replied calmly and firmly, “Buy? No, we do not sell property. We only provide rental properties.”

“I’m just trying to have a general sense of the prices.” Klein explained awkwardly.

Scarter hesitated for a few seconds before saying, “Last month, the owner of 11 Daffodil Street sold a limited-period land deed with a similar property sitting atop the land. 300 pounds for fifteen years. It is much cheaper than renting directly but not everyone can fork out such a large sum of money. If one would like to buy it over completely, the owner’s posted price is 850 pounds.”

850 pounds? Klein quickly made the mental calculations.

My weekly pay is three pounds, Benson eans one pound and ten soli... Rent is thirteen soli and if we eat well every day, we would spend nearly two pounds a week. On top of that, there are expenses such as clothes, transportation, social expenditures, so on and so forth. We can only save less than twenty soli a week. One year adds up to about 35 pounds. 850 pounds would require more than twenty years. Even if we bought the land for a limited period of time for 300 pounds, it would take us at least eight or nine years... That doesn’t include getting married, living independently, raising children, traveling, and so on...

In a world without individual housing loans, most people are likely to opt for rental...

Realizing this, he stepped back and stole a glance at Benson. He beckoned him to talk to Scarter about the rent.

As for Melissa’s intentions, they were obvious from her bright eyes!

At that moment, Klein suddenly thought of letting Benson loose.

Benson tapped his plain cane and looked around before he said, “We should take a look at other houses. The dining area’s lighting isn’t good, and the balcony is very small. Look, only that bedroom has a fireplace, and the furniture is too old. If we move in, we have to at least change half of these...”

He pointed out faults in a hurried tone, spending ten minutes to persuade Scarter to lower the rent to twelve soli and the furniture usage fee to three pence, while rounding up the deposit to two pounds.

Without further ado, the siblings returned with Scarter to the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company and signed two copies of the contract. They then headed over to the Notary Office of Tingen City to notarize the contract.

After paying the deposit and first week’s rent, Klein and Benson’s remaining money added up to nine pounds, two soli, and eight pence.

Standing before the door of 2 Daffodil Street, they each held a bunch of copper keys. They were momentarily unable to look away; their emotions churning within them.

“It feels like a dream...” After a while, Melissa lifted her head to look at the future “Moretti Residence,” and she spoke with a low yet unsteady voice.

Benson let out a breath and smiled.

“Then don’t wake up.”

Klein wasn’t as emotional as they were. He nodded and said, “We need to change the locks of the main door and balcony door as soon as possible.”

“There’s no hurry. The reputation of Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is very good. The rest of the money is for your formal suit. However, before that, we need to pay Mr. Franky a visit.” Benson pointed in the direction of the apartment.

...

The siblings made do with rye bread at home before heading for a terrace apartment on Iron Cross Street. When they knocked on their landlord’s door, Mr. Franky declared imposingly while his short frame perched on a sofa, “You know my rules. No one is allowed to be behind their rent!”

Benson leaned forward and smiled.

“Mr. Franky, we are here to give up our lease.”

That straightforward? Would negotiating this way work? Standing beside Benson, Klein was shocked when he heard him.

On the way here, Benson had said that his bottomline was a compensation of twelve soli.

“Give up your lease? No! We have a contract, and there’s still half a year left!” Franky glared at Benson as he flailed his arms.

Benson looked at him seriously and waited for a moment before saying calmly, “Mr. Franky, you should understand that you could have made much more money.”

“Make much more?” Franky asked with interest, touching his skinny face.

Benson sat up straight and explained with a smile, “The twobedroom unit was rented to the three of us for five soli and six pence. But if you were to rent it to a family of five or six people, with two or three of them working and getting paid, I think they would be willing to pay more to stay there instead of staying at Lower Street where it’s ridden with crime. I think five soli ten pence or six soli would be a reasonable price.”

Franky’s eyes brightened up and his throat moved as Benson continued to say, “Besides, you are certainly aware that rental prices have been increasing in recent years. The longer we stay, the greater a loss you incur.”

“But... I need time to look for a new tenant.” Mr. Franky, who had inherited the apartment building, obviously liked the idea.

“I believe you can find one very quickly since you have the ability and resources to do so. Maybe two days, maybe three days... We will pay for the losses you incur during this time. How about the deposit of three soli that we have paid? It is very reasonable!” Benson immediately decided for Franky.

Franky nodded in satisfaction.

“Benson, you are such a conscientious and honest young man. Alright then, let’s sign the termination of contract.”

Klein was dumbfounded watching this happen. He completely understood how easy it was to ‘convince’ Mr. Franky.

That’s way too easy...

With the problem of the previous contract resolved, the three siblings first helped Klein buy his formal wear and then got busy with moving house.

They didn't have anything heavy or bulky as bulkier items belonged to the landlord. Thus, Benson and Melissa rejected Klein's idea of hiring a carriage, and instead carried their things themselves. They went back and forth between Daffodil Street and Iron Cross Street.

The hot sun outside the window set in the west, and golden rays shone through the oriel window, scattering across the desk's surface. Klein looked at the rack that had books and notebooks arranged neatly before putting an ink bottle and a fountain pen on the table which he had wiped earlier.

It's finally over... He let out a breath of relief and heard his stomach growl. He loosened his rolled up sleeves as he walked towards the door.

He had a bed that belonged to him. The bedsheet and blanket were white, old but clean.

Klein twisted the doorknob and walked out of his bedroom. Just as he was preparing to say something, he saw both doors on the opposite side open simultaneously as Benson and Melissa came into his view.

Looking at the dust and dirt marks on their faces, Klein and Benson suddenly burst out into laughter, sounding abnormally cheerful.

Melissa bit her lips lightly but the laughter was contagious. She eventually let out a soft laugh.

...

The next morning.

Klein stood before a full-length mirror with no cracks, seriously smoothing out his collar and sleeves of his shirt.

The outfit included a white shirt, black tuxedo, silk top hat, black vest, a set of trousers, boots, and a bow tie. He felt the pinch of paying eight pounds in total.

However, the effect was great. Klein felt that his reflection in the mirror exhibited greater scholarly qualities and made him look more handsome.

Click!

He closed his pocket watch and put it into his inner pocket. He then took his cane and hid his revolver. He took the tracked public carriage and arrived at Zouteland Street.

The moment he entered the Blackthorn Security Company, he realized that he was so used to his previous lifestyle that he had forgotten to give Melissa extra money but allowed her to walk to school instead.

Shaking his head, he took note of it before stepping into Blackthorn Security Company. He saw the brown-haired girl, Rozanne, making coffee. A rich aroma permeated throughout the office.

"Good morning, Klein. The weather is great today," Rozanne greeted him with a smile. "To be frank, I have always been curious. In such weather, don't you men feel hot wearing those formal suits? I know for a fact that Tingen's summer isn't as hot as the South's, but it is still summer."

"It's the price of style," Klein replied humorously. "Good morning, Miss Rozanne. Where's the Captain?"

"Same old place." Rozanne pointed inside.

Klein nodded. He went through the partition and knocked on Dunn Smith's office door.

"Come in." Dunn's voice was deep and gentle as usual.

When he saw Klein, who looked quite different in a set of nice formal wear, he nodded and his gray eyes smiled.

"Have you decided?" he asked.

Klein took a deep breath and answered seriously, "Yes, I have made a decision."

Dunn slowly sat up straight. His expression became solemn but the deep recesses of his gray eyes remained the same.

“Tell me your answer.”

Klein replied without hesitation, “Seer!”

Dunn Smith stared at Klein with his gray eyes for a full minute without a word.

Klein did not cower under the pressure of the silence and his gaze. He continued locking his eyes with Dunn.

"You must understand that once you consume the potion, there will be no room for regret." Finally, Dunn spoke again in a deep emotionless voice.

Klein grinned and said, "I know, but I respect the voice in me."

First, Sleepless does not meet my requirements. It was the same for Spectator which he heard from the Tarot Club based on description. He was unsure when he would come into contact with other Beyonder pathways. A slow remedy could not work for an urgent situation; therefore, there was no need for him to wait. By the same logic, Corpse Collector was eliminated as well, leaving the two choices—Mystery Pryer and Seer.

Under the premise that potions of the same Sequence were equally dangerous and him unable to obtain more information, as well as the fact that both Mystery Pryer and Seer met his requirements, then regardless of whether Emperor Roselle was making a passing remark or if he really regretted not choosing Apprentice, Marauder, and Seer, it was enough to tip the balance in his heart.

Furthermore, he could tell from the diary that as long as he figured out the true essence of digestion and acting, he would be able to avoid the negative effects the potion would bring to a significant extent. As for the murmurings and illusory enticements that could drive people to corruption and madness, he had already encountered that even without being a Beyonder!

"Alright." Dunn stood up and picked up his halved top hat. As he put it on, he said, "Follow me down."

Klein nodded and gave a gentleman's bow in gratitude.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Both of them ventured down, their footsteps echoing through the silent and vast stairwell and passageway.

Klein suddenly felt gripped by anxiety as he tried to find a topic of conversation.

"Captain, you mentioned that taking the potion would not directly give me the corresponding knowledge on mysticism, that I'll only have the qualifications to learn it. Then, where does the basic knowledge of mysticism come from? Did our

predecessors risk their lives for it or obtain it via other means?"

Every time he went underground, he would find the air especially fresh. Clearly, the ventilation was excellent. However, the occasional gust of wind made one shiver.

Dunn glanced at him, the darkness in his gray eyes appearing abnormally deep.

He answered calmly, "One of them is as you said, experimentation, summarization, and enhancement. Second, being bestowed by the gods. Third, heh. The dangerous murmurs that others can't hear do not only growl and roar senselessly. At times, they will describe some matters regarding mysticism. But according to what I know, people who truly listen to the murmurs on a long-term basis have gone mad without exception. Or they would fall to corruption and become monsters. Of course, we must thank them. The notebooks they've left behind are precious treasures in the field of mysticism."

Human lab rats? The underground passage's cold humidity made Klein shudder suddenly.

Then, would my luck enhancement ritual which turned into "Social Network Magic" eventually lead to similar effects due to the crazy and horrible murmurs?

At the intersection, Dunn did not proceed toward Chanis Gate, nor did he turn to the weapons, materials and archives. Instead, he took Klein to the left and approached Saint Selena Cathedral.

Midway, he stopped. It was unclear what he touched to open a secret door.

"This is our Nighthawks team's alchemy room. I will get Old Neil to retrieve the Seer potion formula and the corresponding materials from inside Chanis Gate. Heh, you have pretty good luck. The Goddess has blessed you with her favor. We should still have the materials needed for two Seer potions. If not, you would have to wait a long while." Dunn pointed at the room behind the door. "Wait here. Later, watch Old Neil concoct the potion. It's the most basic part of mysticism studies. Oh, do not randomly touch things in there. They are either very dangerous, expensive, or both."

With that said, Dunn added like before.

"Oh right, I forgot something again. Your becoming a Beyonder is a result of you having to face danger and the need to find the notebook. The meritorious deed was only a part of it; therefore, you will not be a member of our team for the time being. You will still be a civilian staff member with a corresponding salary. You will still do what I instructed you to do previously. One additional thing is to learn more about mysticism with Old Neil. You can arrange the time with him."

"Alright." Other than feeling a little disgruntled by the lack of a pay rise, Klein was in full agreement with the rest.

According to Dunn, there was still the process of learning and grasping one's newfound powers after consuming the potion. If he were to become a formal member immediately and participate in paranormal missions, his death was certain.

Dunn turned around and walked two steps towards the intersection when he suddenly turned back.

"Another thing."

I knew it... Klein was already used to the "style" of his Captain.

"We got something out of the Secret Order's actions," said Dunn with his usual expression. "It's unlikely they will provoke you in the near future, but don't be careless. It has to do with them being temporarily unable to confirm whether the Antigonus family's notebook is important to them. From what we discovered, they have preserved some of the ancient customs and we can confirm that they are related to the Solomon Empire and the corrupted nobles of that period."

"Got it. Thanks, Captain," said Klein as he exhaled.

This was also one of the reasons why he did not wish to wait, grasping the chance of becoming a Beyonder in such a hurry!

As he watched Dunn leave and confirmed that he would not turn his head to say more, Klein slowly walked into the alchemy room.

The room had long tables. There were test tubes, pipettes, scales and crucibles. It resembled a chemistry laboratory from his previous life. It was just more spartan and ancient.

Other than that, there was a huge cauldron, a darkwood ladle, a translucent crystal ball, and other items. The Dark Sacred Emblem and other strange emblems were visible everywhere. They gave the room a tint of mystery.

Klein looked around with interest, but he was not stupid enough to touch the things.

After a while, he heard footsteps. Old Neil carried a tiny silver chest with complicated patterns. He was still wearing his unique classic black robe that seemed anachronistic, matched with a felt hat with a rounded edge of the same color.

"Lad, I never expected you to choose Seer." Old Neil put down the chest and used his somewhat turbid red eyes to size up Klein. "Your personality is just like mine when I was young. You just don't want to follow the masses. Not bad. Light these few gas lamps and close the door."

“Alright.” Klein tried hard not to tremble as he lit each gas lamp in the alchemy room. He made dim light rule over the place once again.

Tak! Tak! Tak! The secret door was closed. He turned back to see the white-haired and deep-wrinkled Old Neil using a bunch of strange tied tree branches to scrub the black cauldron.

“The concoction of a Sequence potion is extremely simple, at least for Sequence 7 and below. There’s no need for a special flame or any additional ritual, much less an incantation. There’s no need for one to participate in it spiritually. All one needs to do is go according to the formula’s steps, add the precise amounts, and mix it. That will be all.” Old Neil’s wrinkles seemed to bloom from his smile.

“For real?” Klein questioned in surprise.

This sounds as simple as my luck enhancement ritual...

Man, it’s quite frightening when you come to think of it...

“Perhaps it’s a gift of the gods. Praise the Lady.” Old Neil drew a haphazard circle over his chest.

Following that, he opened the silver chest and pulled out goatskin parchment that exuded antiquity.

The yellowish-brown goatskin unfurled inch by inch, revealing words on it. Klein looked from a distance and realized it was in Hermes, a language he was very familiar with.

It was written in ink that resembled blood, seemingly having its fluidity remain intact. But other than that, it did not seem extraordinary in any way.

“Seer: 100 milliliters of pure water, 13 drops of night vanilla liquids, 7 gold mint leaves...” Klein silently recited the formula’s content, but the rest of it was blocked by Old Neil’s wrist, preventing him from reading it.

“Pure water is water that is repeatedly distilled. Thankfully, I made some previously, so there’s no need to waste time on it.” While Old Neil gave the introduction, he took a large sealed glass bottle from the table with great familiarity.

He took off the stopper and poured about 100 milliliters of pure water into the cauldron without much thought.

Klein did not dare ask, afraid he would affect Old Neil’s concoction. After all, he was the one drinking the potion.

“13 drops of night vanilla juices. This can be extracted and stored as an essential oil ahead of time.” Old Neil took out a tiny brown bottle from the silver chest and with a pipette and dripped 13 drops into the cauldron in a relaxed manner.

A faint but easing fragrance emanated, making Klein feel an abnormal sense of peace.

“7 gold mint leaves...” Old Neil picked up a silver patterned can and removed its lid. With his bare hands, he picked up a few leaves and scattered it into the cauldron. He caught a whiff of a fresh and stimulating scent.

“4, 5, 6, 7. Perfect.” Old Neil chuckled and looked at the potion formula on the goatskin. “3 drops of poison hemlock. This isn’t something you should drink randomly. It can cause your entire body to numb to the point of death. In ancient times, it proved to be the best option for committing suicide.”

It’s not like I’m silly... Klein lampooned.

Old Neil changed pipettes and dripped the poison hemlock into the cauldron. The mixture caused a strange smell that freshened one’s mind.

“9 grams of dragon blood grass powder.” Old Neil took his time to reach his hand into the silver chest and pulled out a transparent test tube. There was some deep black powder inside.

He used a beaker and a scale to measure 9 grams of powder and poured it into the cauldron. He then stirred the mixture twice with the darkwood ladle. The laidback process of making the concoction made Klein a little worried.

“In fact, the materials from before were just supplemental. The exact amount doesn’t really affect the final outcome. Should I put a little bit more?” Old Neil made a joke. “The last two is what’s crucial. The amount can be slightly lowered, but it cannot be too far from the requirement, or your ‘enhancement’ can fail. Oh, the quantity cannot be any more, even just by a bit. If so, you will have to be treated for mental problems. It’s not impossible to die immediately.”

Klein immediately tensed up as he saw Old Neil pull out a black glass bottle from the silver chest.

“Lavos Squid’s blood, 10 milliliters. This kind of squid is considered an extraordinary biological species. It is clearly mutated. It is covered in mystery. Its blood will rapidly break down under sunlight and lose its unique qualities. It has to be stored in opaque material.” Old Neil’s tone no longer sounded relaxed. He quickly and carefully retrieved 10 milliliters of blood with a test tube.

The blood was blue like the sky. From time to time, it produced illusory bubbles as though it was connected to the spiritual world.

“After pouring the blood inside the test tube, the remaining drops are ignored as a form of precaution,” whispered Old Neil.

The moment the blue blood entered the cauldron and made contact with the liquid from before, it produced bubbling sounds. The surrounding light was dyed with a light blue tinge, making Klein feel a strange sense of distance but also familiarity.

It felt like the feeling of being in a mother’s womb. It elevated a human’s soul.

“The final item. Star Crystal. 50 grams.” Old Neil’s voice sounded in Klein’s ears, jolting him awake as he looked at the table.

In the old gentleman’s hand was a piece of extremely pure crystal. Furthermore, the crystal appeared gelatinous, as though it was jelly from Earth. It lacked hardness.

Under the blue light’s illumination, it reflected bits of light as it seemed to contain a resplendent void of stars within.

“This is excellent material for the creation of divination crystals... Just a little less in consideration of any mistakes.” As Old Neil measured, he used a tiny patterned silver blade to extract the crystal.

“Pure water, night vanilla, gold mint leaves, poison hemlock juice, dragon blood grass, Lavos Squid blood, and Star Crystal make up a Seer...” At that moment, Klein could not help but recall the formula.

With everything done, Old Neil poured in a few blocks of Star Crystal into the cauldron.

Sizzle!

Illusory fog instantly spewed forth, turning the alchemy room into a blur.

Klein seemed to see a vast array of stars amid the fog and felt like he was being observed by an invisible existence.

A few seconds later, the fog dissipated. Old Neil used the darkwood ladle and scooped out some sticky dark-blue liquid. It had strange characteristics—gooey and inseparable. Not one bit was left in the black cauldron.

The dark-blue liquid was poured into an opaque cup before Old Neil pointed at it.

“It’s done, your Seer potion.”

Klein looked at the dark-blue gelatinous liquid, finding it hard to describe it as either a block or cup of liquid. He swallowed his saliva and said in great difficulty, "Am I to drink it just like that?

"Is there no need for any other preparations? Like a ritual, an incantation, or a prayer?"

Old Neil acknowledged tersely before saying, "Preparation? There is. Get a cup of Intis Aurmir grape wine, suck on a Desi cigar, then whistle a relaxing tune, and dance an upbeat court dance. You can do a tap dance if you prefer that. Finally, play a round of Gwent cards..."

When he saw Klein's expression turn dumbfounded, Old Neil laughed and summarized what he had just said.

"If you feel nervous."

...You are quite humorous, aren't you...? The corners of Klein's mouth twitched as he resisted the urge to draw his gun.

He put his cane down and extended his right hand. As though he held something heavy, he raised the opaque cup. The smell of the potion was faint and seemingly ethereal.

"Lad, do not hesitate. The more you hesitate, the more nervous and afraid you will be. That will only affect the absorption that follows," said Old Neil with his back facing Klein. It was as though he had said it casually.

It was unknown when he arrived by the nearby water basin. He turned on the tap and washed his hands.

Klein nodded silently and took a deep breath. Just like he was back when he was a child, he pinched his nose and drank it like medicine. He moved the opaque cup to his mouth and tipped his head, drinking it down with a gulp.

A cool and smooth feeling quickly filled his oral cavity. It then flowed through his gullet and into his stomach.

The sticky, dark-blue liquid seemed to grow out thin and long tentacles, bringing stimulation and coldness to every cell in Klein's body.

He could not help but convulse as his vision rapidly went into a blur. All colors seemed to saturate. The reds were redder, the blues were bluer, and the blacks were blacker. The rich colors blended like an impressionist painting.

Klein had seen such a scene before. It was back when he was questioned by the Spirit Medium, Daly.

At that moment, his vision became a blur and although his mind felt light, it was clear. He felt like a castaway floating in the sea.

Slowly, his surroundings turned discernible. All the colors returned to their original as a grayish and blurry fog emanated.

Around him were forms he found difficult to describe. There were transparent objects that did not seem to exist. Deep down, there were lustrous brilliances of different colors which seemed to possess life or contain immense knowledge.

This is a little similar to what I saw during the luck enhancement ritual... As Klein instinctively looked down, he realized that 'he' was still standing in his original spot, body convulsing.

Suddenly, he came to a realization, causing his consciousness to sink abruptly and fuse with him.

Boom!

The fog quickly dissipated as the colors restored to normal. The bright, clear halo and the inexistent objects instantly vanished.

The scene in the alchemy room returned to normal, but Klein felt his head swell. He felt like it was being yanked apart. Whatever he saw had countless afterimages. His ears were overwhelmed by an ethereal murmur.

“Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea...”

Klein felt a stabbing pain at his forehead as he quickly had thoughts of causing destruction to vent the discomfort in him.

He frowned and hurriedly shook his head.

“Is your vision abnormal? Are you also hearing things you did not use to hear?” said Old Neil, at his side with a concealed smile.

“Yes, Mr. Neil, what should I do?” Klein tolerated the intense mania and asked.

Old Neil chuckled.

“This is the resulting seepage of the potion’s energy. You lack the means to control it. Alright, do as I say. Think of an object in your mind, something common. Make it simple and easy.”

Klein quickly focused as he envisaged his own halved top hat woven from black silk. He recalled the feeling when he touched it and its exact shape.

“Place all your focus on it. Keep repeating that while creating the outlines. Does it feel a little better?” Old Neil’s voice penetrated into his mind like a serene song.

Klein turned his focus bit by bit to the imagined top hat. He felt the murmurs subside into a whisper before they vanished. The afterimages he saw also stacked upon one another and no longer appeared a blur.

“Much better,” said Klein after calming his mind of chaotic emotions and having exhaled.

He looked down at his body and discovered that nothing abnormal had happened.

He moved his limbs and with half-anticipation and half-doubt, asking, “I succeeded? I’m now considered a Seer?”

Old Neil pulled out a mirror-like mercury plate and shoved it in front of him.

“Look at your eyes.”

Klein focused his gaze and saw that he was wearing a black top hat. His outline stood out and his facial features looked normal. Apart from having his face covered in sweat, he did not seem different in any way.

He followed Old Neil’s instruction and carefully looked at his eyes. Only then did he discover that his brown eyes had deepened quite significantly. It was so much deepened that it was like the night—one in complete darkness. It felt so deep that it could absorb the souls of others.

Normally, dark brown pupils are easily recognized as black. Without looking very carefully, even Klein himself would not have noticed.

“This is a physical manifestation of the potion’s powers. When you learn Cogitation and how to converge your power, your eyes will return to normal.” Old Neil smiled as he reached out his right hand. “Congratulations, our new Beyonder, our Seer.”

“Thank you.” Klein reached out his hand and shook it. “Mr. Neil, when can I learn how to Cogitate?”

“You can learn it now. The initial steps of Cogitation are relatively simple. It’s even more so for Beyonders,” said Old Neil with a smile. “Just now, producing an object in your mind to divert your attention and turning the energy seepage inwards is actually the first step to Cogitation. Try doing it again.”

Klein closed his eyes and once again, his mind depicted the halved top hat.

His concentration seemed to be more easily focused than before. Soon, random thoughts that surfaced would quickly vanish, leaving the hat's outline.

"Let your brain go somewhat blank. Exchange the object you imagined. Use something that does not exist in this world, an object you imagine completely out of thin air."

"You have to follow this rule. Only by doing so can you enter Cogitation, only then can you exceed the concept of 'I.' The limitless 'I' will become one with the universe, giving you the ability to see and understand the truth. You will obtain knowledge only you yourself can understand. In the domain of mysticism studies, it's called a Mystic Experience," said Old Neil using a pacifying tone. "You just need to listen to the descriptions that I'll get to later. What's most important is to enter Cogitation."

Something that doesn't exist in this world. Imagine something completely out of thin air... Would things from Earth count? Klein attempted using an earthy-green intercontinental missile he saw on television. He replaced the half top hat with this long and thick missile.

However, regardless of how he outlined it or imagined it, he ultimately only ended up focusing his attention.

It doesn't seem like it will work... Klein had no choice but to let his imagination run wild. He outlined a sphere of light and then many similar objects, gathering them together.

The spheres of light stacked upon one another. It felt like an object of fantasy. Klein's thoughts gradually turned ethereal and afloat.

His body and mind calmed down. The objects that did not seem to exist, the fog with the bright clusters of light, and the complex colors appeared once again. They floated in the sky in close reach.

He extended his spirituality inch by inch as he looked down at them quietly. He sensed it and took it in.

"Very good. As expected of a Seer. You entered Cogitation very smoothly. You are just slightly worse than me back then. Slightly," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "In that case, I'll begin teaching you the most common, easiest to grasp, and most useful ability in the future in mysticism. Spirit Vision!"

He switched off the gas lamps one after another but opened the door to the alchemy room. It made the spot where Klein was dark, but not to the point of failing to make out silhouettes of objects.

"Alright. in your present state, raise your hands and place them in front of your eyes. Your index fingers need to face each other, but they are not to touch.

"Open your eyes and keep them open until you are accustomed to the darkness."

Klein completed each step according to Old Neil's description. He saw the silhouettes of his fingers and the surrounding objects.

"Actually, you should be lying down to let your body be entirely relaxed. But since the effect of your Cogitation is not bad, let's continue." Old Neil laughed. "Focus your gaze on a spot behind your hands. It has to be behind. Then, slowly move your fingers and maintain the same pose without touching them. Also, do not pull them out of your sight."

Klein calmly listened to it and cast his gaze at an empty spot behind his palms. He then slowly moved his index fingers within his vision.

Once, twice, thrice... Suddenly, Klein saw a fiery-red color in between his fingers.

"Eh..." He let out a sound.

"You see color? That's right. That's the initial step to Spirit Vision. The color you see is your aura," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "No rush. Do it a few more times. After stabilizing it, look elsewhere. I'll also take this opportunity to explain to you the different meanings of the different colors."

"Alright." Klein moved his fingers back and forth while having his vision trained on the fiery-red.

Old Neil thought for a moment before saying, “To put it simply, the mainstream way of mysticism is to split non-physical parts of a human into four levels. At its core is the Soul Body, which is also everyone’s basic spirituality. There is a school of thought that believes all biological creatures have spirituality and have a Soul Body.

“I’m not sure about anything else, but to Mystery Pryers, the goal of Cogitation and the method to increase our strength is directed toward the Soul Body.

“Outside the Soul Body is the Astral Projection. It is the means for the Soul Body to communicate with the spirit world and with the cosmos. It’s considered an external manifestation of the Soul Body. Besides, it will be directly related to your personal ambition and your prevailing emotions... The scenes you see after consuming the potion are scenes your Astral Projection sees when it wanders through the spirit world. That world does not obey the laws of the physical world. It involves exceeding the concept of ‘I,’ the limitless ‘I’, and the Universe’s ‘I.’ The past, present, and future might be stacked upon one another and that is the source of divination.

“In the spirit world, what you see is just an imagery, a symbol. You have to interpret it to understand its actual meaning.

“Divination and many magic spells are cast through the Astral Projection.

“Do not mistake its relationship and differences with a Soul Body.”

One is just a body and the other is for form... Klein continued looking at the aura in between his fingertips and made the simple conclusion.

“Further out will be the Body of Heart and Mind. From this point forth, it will combine with the physical body... It involves your brain and is an overall manifestation of your inferential abilities, your analytical abilities, your observational abilities, and identification abilities. Some potions will mainly raise this. Quite a number of magic spells target it as well.”

Old Neil explained in relatively great detail, “The outermost layer is the Ether Body. It is a manifestation of your vital energies and physical form.”

“The aura color you see is an external phenomenon of your Ether Body. In other words, apart from the spiritual bodies, ghosts, and specters you can see directly with Spirit Vision, it might also include certain existences that should not be seen. You can also see the Ether Bodies of others or their auras. From their thickness, brightness, and color, you can determine their health and emotional state.

“When your Spirit Vision improves and you grasp more mysticism knowledge, you will be able to discover even more details. You can even determine the lifespan of others.

“By the way, the emotional state I mentioned would also manifest itself because of your Astral Projection. When you go higher in Sequence, your Spirit Vision will reach a relatively high stage. Someone else’s Astral Projection will even be detectable. That way, you will learn even more things. This is a level only Seers and Mystery Pryers can attain.

“Some fellows even claim that the strongest form of Spirit Vision allows one to see anything in any place, including the past and future. However, I’m skeptical about it.”

It sounds quite powerful... Klein was almost turning eager.

Old Neil coughed and continued, “Let’s return to the Ether Body and the colors of the auras. Your limbs and parts that are required in motion will appear red. Your head and brain’s surface will appear as purple. Spots that excrete waste will appear orange. The digestion system will appear as yellow. The heart and other regulatory systems will appear green. Your throat and other parts of the nervous system will appear blue. An entirely balanced body will make a body be cloaked in white... That is a symbol of health.

“Once it turns dark or the thickness thins, the color will change. That indicates that the corresponding spot has turned problematic. It means it’s in a state of exhaustion or illness.

“In addition, the inner layer of the Astral Projection represents prevailing emotions. Red means passion and excitement. Orange means warmth and satisfaction. Yellow means happiness and extroversion. Green means calm and peace. Blue means coldness and stillness that one is in thought. White means brightness, an eagerness to improve. Dark colors mean worry, sorrow, and silence. Purple means that spirituality is taking control of the lead, coldness and estrangement...”

Klein silently memorized the information and stabilized his initial Spirit Vision.

“Good, you can look at other objects.” Old Neil did not speak further as he nodded.

Klein slowly turned his head and looked at Old Neil. Indeed, he saw different colors in different parts of his body. The aura was both thick and thin at different spots. The purple color at his head was brightest and his limbs’ redness was relatively dark. The overall whiteness to his body was somewhat faded as well.

Indeed, he’s getting on in age... Klein made a silent comment to himself.

Only with what he saw did he feel that he had become a Beyonder!

“I am now a Beyonder!”

He shifted his gaze and carefully sized up Old Neil when suddenly he saw a translucent pair of cold and ruthless eyes without any brows in the void behind him!

These nearly illusory eyes were staring at Old Neil intently, as well as him!

This... Klein shuddered as he gapped and said, “You have a pair of eyes behind you!”

Old Neil was taken aback before he forced a smile.

“Ignore them.”

The moment Old Neil finished his sentence, the illusory pair of eyes that lurked in the darkness behind him vanished. Even in his Spirit Vision state, Klein was no longer able to identify traces of its existence.

“This is a characteristic of ritualistic magic,” explained Old Neil with a chuckle.

Fascinating... Is Spirit Vision an enhanced version of Yin-Yang eyes? Klein felt like a child who had received a new toy. In excitement, he turned his gaze away and began observing every corner of the room. He wanted to see the differences of the alchemy room with and without the Spirit Vision.

The outlines of the objects in the dark such as the tables, test tubes, scales, cups, and cupboards did not look different from how it looked like without Spirit Vision. They did not emit any lights or colors.

Objects without lives do not have any spirituality? Klein mumbled to himself as he swept his gaze toward the silver chest.

Suddenly, he saw a vibrancy of colors. The colors were as blue as the sky, as resplendent as the stars, or as crimson red as burning flames!

“Materials from extraordinary beings still have some life in them, and uh... are still active? Even if the source is already dead?” Klein deliberated on his words as he sought Old Neil’s help.

“A precise description is that they have remnant spiritualities. It is one of the crucial points of a successful potion concoction. It is also one the reasons why a Beyonder will lose control. Dunn should have already informed you,” explained Old Neil frankly.

He suddenly laughed, having recalled something.

“I remember that the formula of Corpse Collector requires a desiccated mature black-spotted frog. To consume that potion requires a lot of courage.”

Klein imagined a little and found it disgusting. He did not echo Old Neil’s words and turned his gaze to a dark area. However, there were no spiritual bodies or ghosts that he looked forward to seeing.

“Isn’t it said that the world of spirits is everywhere?” he asked out of curiosity.

Old Neil chuckled tersely before saying, “Punk, repeat after me.

“This is the headquarters of a Nighthawk squad. This is the ground beneath the Church of Evernight. There are many Beyonders here!

“Do you think we will allow spirits and souls to wander around here? Furthermore, the spiritual world and spirit are two different concepts.”

Klein felt a little embarrassed as he turned his head, pretending to look at the faint light from the gas lamps at the entrance.

“I get it.”

While speaking, the area between his brows began to spasm.

What’s happening? Just as Klein turned around to ask, he suddenly saw a figure standing quietly by the door at the periphery of the light. It appeared human, though its aura’s colors and the darkness blended perfectly, making it impossible to discern.

Hiss!

Klein felt a painful spasm at his glabella [1]. His vision turned chaotic as he focused his attention again, but there was no “formless” figure!

Strange... He turned around and asked.

“Mr. Neil, the spot in between my brows is a little painful from spasms.”

“Haha, this is very common. You are a new Beyonder. Spirit Vision places a great burden on your Soul Body. Furthermore, it drains you constantly. Physical effects can be glabella spasms, headaches, oversensitivity, and minor bouts of hallucinations. And while viewing things with Spirit Vision, it’s very easy to feel uncomfortable as a result of the unfamiliar surroundings. It’s also very easy to have your emotions affected by others. These are things that require you to pay attention. You can become accustomed to and eliminate them with repeated practice. In addition, use it sparingly and end it in a timely fashion,” answered Old Neil with a smile.

Why does it feel like you are delighted by this... Klein hurriedly asked for advice, “Then, how do I exit from the state of having Spirit Vision?”

He had planned on mentioning the invisible figure he had seen, though when he heard of the minor bouts of hallucination among the symptoms, he struck that thought away.

From the glabella spasm and headache, he could completely guess Old Neil’s answer!

“Like before, think of an item to divert your attention. It will bring you out of Cogitation. Close your eyes and control your spirituality and repeatedly tell it to end. When you open your eyes again, you will discover that your Spirit Vision has ended.”

Old Neil described leisurely and when he was done, added, “Of course, that is the most trivial and clumsy method. We can repeatedly hint to ourselves in Cogitation from practice to affect our spirituality. That way, you will have a simple switch. For instance, tapping at your glabella twice lightly would allow you to easily activate Spirit Vision. Another two taps will simply end it. As for how you set it up, it depends on your habits and preferences.

“Got it.” Klein thought for a moment and planned to imitate Old Neil to use tapping his glabella twice as a switch for his Spirit Vision.

Tapping once was easily mistaken as an instinctive knock to his head and tapping thrice could be a waste of valuable time in dangerous situations. As for actions like snapping fingers, they were too attention-drawing.

He eased his focus and imagined the stacked spheres of light and re-entered a state of Cogitation.

Under Old Neil’s guidance, after repeated hints and practice, he finally “set up” his “switch.”

He clenched his fist slightly and used his index finger’s joint to tap at his glabella twice. Immediately, there were glowing auras of differing thickness and colors appearing before his eyes.

After another two taps, everything returned to normal.

“I’ve finally grasped it...” he sighed with delight.

Only then did he realize how exhausted he was, feeling like he could fall asleep at any time. His mind hurt as though he had stayed up for three nights.

Old Neil said with a chuckle, “We are not Sleepless. Every practice and every time Spirit Vision is used excessively, you will need some sleep. You can now go back and have a good rest. In the afternoon, go to Iron Cross Street where Welch’s place is and walk around. Try your best to find clues about the Antigonus family’s notebook as soon as possible. Tomorrow, I’ll continue teaching you about mysticism. Of course, do not forget to read the historical documents.”

“Alright.” Klein was in full agreement with Old Neil’s arrangements.

He picked up his cane and left the alchemy room. He watched the door close as Old Neil returned to the armory. Klein massaged his glabella and temples and with the help of his cane, sauntered up the stairwell.

At that moment, Dunn Smith came from behind him with the corners of his lips hooked. With a deep gaze, he said, “I heard from Old Neil that you are a very suitable candidate. Even without Cogitation, you were able to use Spirit Vision.”

“Perhaps, it’s a unique trait of being a Seer,” replied Klein humbly.

He guessed that Dunn had been watching the armory for Old

Neil.

Dunn slowed down and went ahead of Klein a little. After a few seconds of silence, he turned around and said, “You have to remember that curiosity killed the cat. It can also kill Beyonders. Do not attempt to probe the murmurings you should not be listening to or seeing existences you should not see.”

“Alright.” Klein knew this was another reminder of how Beyonders lost control.

After entering Blackthorn Security Company, he greeted Rozanne who obviously did not know that he had become a Beyonder. He slowly walked out the door and reached the streets where he took a trackless carriage to Daffodil Street. He nearly fell asleep on his return journey.

It was still in the morning and the temperature was about twenty-six degree Celsius. Klein pulled out a copper key from his waistband and opened the door to his home.

There were still many items missing from his home. The living room and dining hall were still empty. Benson and Melissa had work or school, so they had both left early in the morning.

Klein did not have the capacity to bother with anything else. He closed the door and briskly went to the second floor and entered the bookshelf-equipped bedroom that belonged to him.

After taking off his tuxedo and hanging it on a clothing rack, he eagerly plunged into bed. The moment his head hit the pillow, he fell asleep.

Klein was awoken by bright sunlight. He turned his head and slowly opened his eyes to discover the burning sun outside.

“What time is it? Did I miss the Tarot Club in the afternoon?” He struggled to get up and walked to the clothing rack to take out his pocket watch from the pocket of the tuxedo’s inner lining.

Not only had he forgotten about the matter, he had forgotten to close the door to his bedroom and pulled the curtains to the oriel window.

Pa!

Klein pulled out the pocket watch and immediately felt relieved when he opened it.

It was only slightly past noon. There was still a lot of time until the scheduled gathering at three in the afternoon.

It was Monday, the day he would have a gathering with The Hanged Man and Justice.

Klein went into thought as he tapped his glabella twice. The scene before him changed once again as he saw that his body had been restored to a bright luster.

He tapped twice again and stopped his Spirit Vision. Relaxed, he went to the first floor and boiled a kettle of water. He placed some inferior-quality tea leaves and chewed on some rye bread dabbed in a little butter.

Afterwards, Klein flipped through historical materials and original Klein’s diary. He began ‘revising’ and consolidating his knowledge.

...

At 2:57pm, Klein closed his book and capped his fountain pen before pulling the curtains.

Immediately following that, he locked the bedroom’s door, making the room turn abnormally dark.

He tapped his glabella twice and activated Spirit Vision to survey his surroundings.

After confirming that there were no invisible spiritual bodies in his room, Klein stopped the Spirit Vision and took out his pocket watch to check the time.

Tick-tock. Tick-tock.

One minute before three, he opened up his pace and like before, walked four steps in a counter-clockwise manner in a squarish shape. He chanted in Chinese softly.

Only this time, he did not prepare any staple food.

Klein closed his eyes as he felt the back of his hands turn itchy. It felt like the four black docks forming a square were protruding and projecting something.

Hysterical shouts and alluring murmurs began resounding, but Klein realized that the headache was not as bad as the first time.

It was not that he was unaffected, but that he was doing his best to stop himself from listening.

As a Beyonder, he had to have more self-control in such an environment.

Soon, his body turned light as he floated up. He saw the grayishwhite and blurry fog that emanated. Then, he saw dark red 'stars.' Two of them had a minuscule connection with him with an abnormal sense of familiarity.

Klein looked at his blurry self and muttered in confusion, "The Astral Projection that Old Neil mentioned?"

He remained calm for a few seconds and again transformed the opulent divine palace with the tall bronze table under the domed ceiling, as well as the twenty-two high-back chairs that corresponded to the different constellations.

Klein calmly walked to the Seat of Honor and made his body and face be immersed in thicker gray fog. He extended his right hand and tapped two familiar deep-red stars and created a miraculous connection.

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1. The glabella, in humans, is the skin between the eyebrows and above the nose.

CHAPTER 34: ADVANCE PAYMENT

In an underground basement without any windows, the burly Alger Wilson sat by a long table with various apparatuses and goatskin parchments on it.

In front of him was a half-consumed candle. The dim, yellowish flame's flickering made the shadows of the objects and table move like a mirage.

Alger's hair was disheveled like seaweed with a deep blue color that resembled black. He wore a robe with lightning patterns embroidered on it. He clasped his hands with his thumbs facing each other while he focused on a bottle of black liquid to the left of the candle.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Splash! Splash! Splash!

The sound of tempestuous winds or the crashing of the sea waves howled from inside the sealed bottle. And in spots where the black ink did not sink, a faint fog would swirl. It was as though it grew eyes and a mouth.

Alger cocked his head to glance at the clock hanging on the wall and watched the needle strike three.

He pressed down on his temple as his eyes turned dark.

Fascinating colors surfaced from the various items on the table.

At that moment, he discovered a deep-red light appear like a tidal wave from nowhere, drowning him instantly!

...

Backlund, Empress Borough, Inside the Hall family's luxurious mansion.

After dismissing her dance teacher, Audrey locked the door and sat straight up in front of her dressing table.

The sun outside was bright and gorgeous. There was a lightbrown notebook made of exquisite goat skin. It was flipped open to reveal that it was blank. To its right was a fountain pen with a golden tip and embedded rubies.

Audrey did a test and made sure that she could pick up the fountain pen and write down the formula the moment she left the Gathering.

"I'm so looking forward to it..." She inhaled to repress her excited emotions as she looked at the mirror with puckered lips.

However, she did not see it reflect herself. Instead, a dark red and illusory beam burst out from her body!

...

Above the gray fog stood a majestic divine hall that looked like a giant's residence.

Dark red colors bloomed on both sides of the bronze table. They surged upwards like a fountain before pattering down. It 'carved' two blurry figures who sat in the same spots as before.

Audrey, with her soft blond hair and tall, slim build, instinctively looked towards the Seat of Honor. She saw the figure immersed in thick gray fog sitting back. One hand was flat, touching the table's side while the other hand was stroking his chin.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~!" Audrey shouted with a cheery voice.

Following that, she turned her head and looked at the person opposite her. With the same tone, she said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Hanged Man~!"

This lady sure is unsophisticated. Is she so sure that I'm a good person? Why isn't there any fear from her? Is she a noble lady who has been protected well? Klein smiled and maintained his unfathomable image.

"Good afternoon, Miss Justice."

As he spoke, he lowered his head slightly and moved his left hand and tapped his glabella twice.

What he saw changed instantly. He saw Justice and The Hanged Man emit the colors of their aura!

And the surrounding gray fog and dark red stars remained the same. Nothing that seemingly did not exist or lustrous brilliances that possessed life was seen.

He shifted his gaze and saw that Justice's aura perfectly matched the colors Old Neil described. What was supposed to be red, purple, blue, or white were their respective colors. Furthermore, they maintained a lustrous brilliance and were of appropriate thickness. It was easy to tell that she was a vibrant young girl.

The colors of her emotions are red and yellow. That's joy, zeal, and excitement... Klein made a judgment before casting his attention towards The Hanged Man.

Like Justice, there was nothing special about the colors of The Hanged Man's aura. His emotions were blue mixed in with some orange.

Calm, thoughtful, careful, and a little pleased? With this being his first attempt, Klein made a conclusion without much confidence.

Just as he shifted his gaze away, he suddenly realized something strange.

The aura of the Hanged Man's innermost layer was nearly of the same color!

Klein focused his mind and took another careful look. He could faintly see that deep within The Hanged Man's Ether Body was a deep blue, akin to the sea. It felt like a tidal storm.

His Astral Projection? Or should I say the surface of his Astral Projection? From the looks of it, he's really a Beyonder, and one that's apparently stronger than Old Neil. Klein analyzed as his mind was filled with questions. "Not necessary. It might have to do with this being a unique environment. It's only because this is my home ground that I'm able to see these things that Old Neil did not manifest."

He turned his head toward Justice again and confirmed that it was a characteristic only Beyonders possessed.

At that moment, Alger also completed his greetings.

Audrey drew a light gasp as she asked in anticipation, "Mr. Hanged Man, did you receive the box of Ghost Shark blood?"

Alger took a look at Klein and saw him tapping his glabella as though he was considering other matters.

"Thank you very much. It perfectly met my expectations. I never expected you to send it to me so quickly. The Ghost Shark blood is not the typical extraordinary creature," said Alger frankly.

Audrey smiled humbly and said, "I'm very happy to see this outcome."

As she loved anything to do with mystery from a young age, she had befriended those in aristocratic circles with similar interests. They have exchanged information, books, and rare artifacts among each other. But before this, none of them had ever obtained any supernatural power to become a real Beyonder. Instead, there were a few princes that hinted that they could gift her what she wanted if she became their princess consort.

However, she had obtained the Ghost Shark blood directly from her family's vault. After all, the inventory only states 'one big bottle,' without mentioning how many milliliters or how full it had to

be, she believed that pouring a little bit of it would go unnoticed. Even if there was an accident and the matter was exposed, her parents were unlikely to pursue the matter.

Alger looked deeply at The Fool who was enveloped in fog before turning his head back with a smile.

“According to our agreement, I will tell you the formula to the potion, Spectator.”

“Let me prepare myself. Alright, begin.” Audrey inhaled as she focused her full attention.

“Low-Sequence potions are very easy to concoct. Just follow the order that I provide you. Do remember that there can be smaller quantities of the ingredients but not more. It would cause major problems. You should have heard about news of Beyonders losing control. I believe there’s no need for me to repeat it?” Alger first mentioned things to take note of.

Audrey nodded gently and said, “I understand completely.”

While she spoke, she turned her head to look at Mr. Fool. She wished to know if the mystery expert had anything to add; unfortunately, The Fool was sitting silently there like a statue.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, “Having smaller quantities does not mean it should deviate by too much... If you do not have an assistant, I suggest you spend some time familiarizing yourself with chemistry experiments.”

“I have a family tutor for such matters,” answered Audrey without feeling the burden.

After Alger mentioned the furthest extent of the deviation, he recited with great fluency, “Spectator. Sequence 9 potion. 80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence. 13 grams of cow teeth paeonol powder. 7 petals of elf flowers. A matured Manhal Fish’s eyeball. Add 35 milliliters of goat-horned black fish blood.

“The final two items are the main ingredients. They are extraordinary creatures from the sea. You have to be careful.”

“Alright.” Audrey recalled and repeated, “80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence, 13 grams of cow

teeth...”

“Paeonol powder,” reminded Alger.

With his help, Audrey gradually and precisely memorized the formula’s order. However, she appeared worried as she mumbled it again and again.

“Do you know about Cogitation?” When Alger saw Justice nod, he continued, “I do not know how much you know about Cogitation. Let me describe it once... After consuming the potion, quickly begin Cogitation to control your spirituality and energy... Make sure to practice every day to truly grasp the powers of the potion. Dig out the meaning it symbolizes and even more of its mysteries. That way, you can avoid the danger of losing control to the greatest extent. And the meaning of a potion mainly lies in its name, such as Spectator!”

Klein silently listened to the conversation and had no plans on interrupting. All he did was secretly memorize and study, but when he heard that, he suddenly had a thought.

Audrey listened to The Hanged Man’s explanations attentively, and just as she was about to inquire about something more detailed, she suddenly heard the rapping sound on the table,

She and Alger turned their heads and looked at The Fool. They realized that the mysterious and mighty figure was tapping gently with his fingers. He said in a deep voice, “It’s not about grasping them, but rather digesting them.

“It’s not about discovery, but rather acting.

“The name of a potion is not only symbolic, it’s also imagery. It is the key to digesting.”

Audrey was dazed and confused from hearing that. She was not very clear on what Mr. Fool was trying to express.

She subconsciously eyed The Hanged Man for a reaction from the corner of her eyes. She was surprised to see him jolt and freeze. It was as though an ordinary person had heard a loud and sudden clap of thunder.

“Digesting, acting... Digesting, acting... Digesting, acting, key...” Alger repeated it again and again softly as though he had grasped a key concept or had succumbed to a strange curse.

After a while, he raised his head and said with a hoarse voice, “Thank you, Mr. Fool. Your hint is as valuable as my life. You have enlightened me greatly. Of course, I believe I have yet to fully understand or comprehend it.”

Klein maintained his mysterious and unfathomable image by saying with a smile, “That was an advance payment.”

In fact, he did not truly understand the exact meaning of what was said. He was just certain that Emperor Roselle was more powerful than the typical Beyonder and stronger than The Hanged Man.”

Advance payment... Audrey looked at The Hanged Man’s reaction and knew that the hint from before was precious. As she ruminated over it, she asked, “Mr. Fool, what do you wish for us to do?”

Opposite to her, Alger said with a nod, “What matter might you wish to entrust us with?”

Klein leaned back slightly as he glanced at the two of them before saying in a soft and pleasant voice, “Collect Roselle

Gustav’s secret diary on my behalf, even if it’s just one page of it.”

Roselle Gustav's secret diary?

Emperor Roselle?

Indeed, only such matters are worth the concern of a mighty figure like Mr. Fool... Audrey was first taken aback before she realized that she found it nothing surprising.

Rumor had it that Emperor Roselle had once seen the Blasphemy Slate. It was said that the secret cards he created hid the twentytwo paths of the divine. This was something every highSequence Beyonder would definitely pay attention to!

"Diary? That's a diary?" Alger frowned slightly as he keenly noticed this tidbit.

The item which Roselle Gustav had left behind had been described by Mr. Fool as a diary!

How did he know?

How did he determine it?

Could he know the way to decipher Roselle's cryptic text?

Faced with The Hanged Man's question and having obtained the desired effect, Klein leaned back into his chair and interlocked his hands. He answered in a relaxed manner, "Let us first view it as a diary for now."

He did not deny or confirm it.

Audrey had heard the children of other nobles mention the matter. However, she had never really learned much of it. With her curiosity piqued, she asked, "It's said that Emperor Roselle's, well, diary was written in a cryptic language or symbols he invented."

"Yes," answered Alger simply. "Some people believe that it is a unique set of symbols from mysticism. Others believe that it is a hieroglyph. But up to today, no one has found the correct way of deciphering it. At the very least, that's all I know."

With that said, he turned his head at Klein in a bid to get some confirmation or show his suspicions.

They are texts that have been passed down for generations, so are no longer in their original state. According to your line of thought, how can it be deciphered... Klein maintained his calm as he secretly gave a self-deprecating laugh.

As for how to handle the symbols of mysticism, he instantly thought of a ridiculous and funny scene.

Dressed in a black-pointed hat and long robe, an evil mage pulls up his sleeve to reveal a symbol tattooed on his arm. It was said that this was a symbol with mysterious power left behind by Emperor Roselle. They were written in two blue, large simplified Chinese characters:

"Retarded Joker!"

The corners of Klein's mouth curved up slowly as he found himself in a good mood.

After hearing The Hanged Man's description, Audrey said in a stumped manner, "We can't understand the symbols or the words... Then, how are we to pass the information to you, Mr. Fool? Or are we to mail it somewhere?"

This is quite an important question... I do not have the means to accept an item secretly... Klein was in no hurry to answer. He repeatedly released his thumbs from his interlocked hands before tapping them back again.

Soon, he thought of a solution.

Since I can create a divine palace and table according to my wishes in here, would it be possible to project the content in the minds of others here?

I'll give it a try...

At that moment, Audrey and Alger saw Mr. Fool slowly sit up amid the thick grayish fog.

"Miss Justice, let us give it a try. Imagine a paragraph of text and give it the emotions of writing it with urgency. Yes, pick up the fountain pen beside you and write on the piece of paper."

Before Klein finished his sentence, Audrey saw a piece of yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and a dark red fountain pen in front of her.

She picked up the fountain pen both curiously and doubtfully. In accordance with the instructions, she imagined a poem Emperor Roselle once wrote:

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind [1]?"

After scrutinizing the text, she picked up her fountain pen and imbued them with the desire of projecting them out.

Klein sensed the emotions and using the fountain pen as a medium, he guided her.

The moment Audrey landed her fountain pen, she saw a line appear on the goatskin parchment.

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

"Goddess, how fascinating!" Audrey exclaimed in astonishment while feeling rueful.

Following that, she looked at Klein with some fear.

"Mr. Fool, can you read what I'm thinking?"

"No, I'm only guiding you. I simplified the process of writing for you and made it become an imprint. If you did not wish to express it, nothing would appear." Klein placated her with a low tone.

"Is that so... Then we can only memorize the symbols or the way the cryptic text looks like. Then, we can present it directly as we wish?" Audrey heaved a sigh of relief as she asked in enlightenment.

"Yes." Klein answered.

"That's not a bad method. Miss Justice, do not doubt your memory. After becoming a Spectator, you will receive immense improvement in this aspect." Alger had watched the attempt from the side, fully coming to the realization that The Fool was more powerful and mysterious than he imagined.

As for his memory, he believed that the next advancement would improve it sufficiently.

Regarding this, Audrey nodded in delight.

"You have delighted me with this reminder. Mr. Hanged Man, do you have any other guidance on Spectators?"

With that said, she looked toward the Seat of Honor.

"Mr. Fool, I will work hard to complete your mission. I will do my best to gather more of Emperor Roselle's secret diary."

"I mentioned before that I'm a person who likes a fair and equal exchange. The advanced payment I gave is only equivalent to two pages of the diary for each person. If there are more, I will give additional in return," Klein said calmly, like he was an adult who did not take advantage of children.

As for where the additional payment could come from, it was naturally from the newly acquired Emperor Roselle diary pages. This formed a virtuous cycle.

"You are truly a generous gentleman." Alger fell silent for a few seconds before bowing slightly with his hand by his chest.

After the bow, he turned to Justice and said, "Let me emphasize once more. A Spectator will forever be a spectator.

“I know that many Spectators enjoy imagining themselves to be the protagonist or some other character. As a result, they invest a lot of feelings into it, to the point of crying, laughing, raging, and turning sorrowful because of the drama. However, that is not what a Spectator should do.

“While faced with the various dramas of society and figures who knowingly or unknowingly act the role of particular characters, you have to maintain the attitude of being an absolute bystander. Only then can you calmly and objectively observe them. You will discover their habits, their tics from lying, or their scent of nervousness. From those minute clues, you can grasp their true thoughts.

“Believe me, everyone is different because of their emotions. They will secrete different ‘things’ and different smells. However, only a real Spectator can sniff it out.

“Once you invest too many of your emotions, your observation will be influenced. Your sensitivity towards the emotions of others will deviate.”

Audrey listened attentively as her eyes brightened gradually.

“It sounds, really, really interesting!”

Klein’s heart stirred when he heard that.

The Spectator potion’s requirement when summarized seemed to be “an absolutely objective and neutral spectator.”

In a particular sense, it was equivalent to acting...

Acting?

Was this the ‘acting’ which Emperor Roselle was referring to?

Then, I will have to act as a Seer, and from there, digest the potion bit by bit?

Just as Klein was immersing himself in thought, Alger finished explaining the demands he knew of a Spectator. He sighed before saying, “It seems like there’s nothing else?

“Perhaps we can have a casual chat. We can talk about things happening around us. Perhaps it is something very normal to you, but in the ears of others, it might be a very important clue.” “Sure.”

Klein snapped back and nodded slightly.

He was already planning to attempt to act as a Seer. After all, it did not seem like there were any negative effects from doing so. “Then, shall we begin with you, Mr. Hanged Man?” Audrey agreed in excitement.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, “The infamous pirate who calls himself Admiral Ludwell has begun his voyage to explore the eastern end of the Sonia Sea again.”

“Oh? The owner of the Black Tulip?” returned Audrey with a question after some thought.

“Yes,” Alger replied with a nod.

I don’t even know who that is... Klein listened silently while he pondered over the news he planned on sharing. It had to be something that did not expose him while also allowing him to gain feedback.

Soon, he decided. He maintained his unfathomable image as The Fool and caressed the side of the bronze table with his fingers.

“According to what I know, the Secret Order has lost an Antigonus family notebook.”

This news was not only known by the Nighthawks from Tingen City. The Secret Order as well as Beyonders with close ties with them similarly knew.

“An Antigonus family notebook?” Alger repeated before smiling with a shake of his head. “I’m really curious as to what reaction the Church of Evernight will have if they learn of it.”

Why would he mention the Church of Evernight? Klein acutely sensed a problem, but it was not appropriate for him to ask.

That would shatter his image as the mysterious and profound Fool.

At that moment, Audrey asked out of curiosity, "Why are you curious? What sort of special reaction would the Goddess's church have?"

Alger smiled and said, "The Antigonus family was destroyed by the Church of Evernight."

"I'm not really sure if it happened at the end of the Fourth Epoch or the early stages of the present epoch."

This... Klein's pupils constricted as a chill suddenly swept through him.

From the looks of it, the value the Nighthawks have placed on this Antigonus notebook far exceeds my imagination!

The reason why they nominated me as a Beyonder—having some contribution and to prevent danger to me are likely negligible reasons—is that they wish for me to raise my spiritual sensitivity to aid them in finding the notebook.

This was not kept from me by Captain. He had mentioned it, but I just didn't pay much attention to it...

After hearing The Hanged Man's explanation, Audrey said with deep interest, "I never imagined that such a thing would happen...

"Alright, my turn. Let me think of what I have to share."

She cocked her head and held her head up with her hand before chuckling.

"Yesterday, my etiquette teacher taught me how to faint, how to faint elegantly without any faux pas. It's a practical skill used at social events to avoid awkward situations or nasty guys... Heh heh. I was just organizing my thoughts. What I really wanted to say is that ever since the failure of the battle on Balam's eastern shore, the king, premier, and gentlemen are under immense stress. They eagerly wish to change."

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1. Adapted from Ode to the Wind which is an ode, written by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

While Audrey recalled the conversation between her father and elder brother about the situation, she put in her own words, “They believe that the government’s structure is too chaotic. Every election, if there is a change of the ruling party, there will be a change of personnel from top to bottom. It makes things a mess and lowers efficiency tremendously. Not only does it cause the battle loss, it also brings great inconvenience to the civilians.”

Klein knew very well that as there was no example to reference, the Loen Kingdom had yet to evolve into a system that examined public servants. The political situation was still in its preliminary stages; therefore, after every election victory, many so-called positions would be awarded to members and supporters.

Hmm, Emperor Roselle not establishing such an institution in Intis does not match his personality... Could it be that he diverted his focus to other things later in life?

When the Hanged Man, Alger, heard that he interjected with a soft chuckle.

“They believe? Then their beliefs are a little slow. Perhaps they will only feel the itch a year after they get bitten by black mosquitoes.”

Black mosquitoes were a type of creature that resided in the south of the Loen Kingdom. It was extremely venomous, and its venom made victims have the urge to rip apart their skin.

Audrey extended her palm and covered her mouth. Ignoring the Hanged Man’s mockery, she expressed the core information of what she said, “Unfortunately, they are temporarily unable to find a good solution to replace this system.”

Klein listened carefully and felt that the topic was in the domain of his expertise. He smiled faintly and said, “This is a simple problem.”

The Foodaholic Empire and the decadent countries that studied the Foodaholic Empire had very advanced experiences of success. “Simple?” Audrey returned with a question in puzzlement.

Although her education did not include politics, she often heard from the discussions of her father, brother, and people around her. She had a sufficient understanding of similar matters.

Klein felt as though he had returned to the message boards of yesteryear. Composed, he said, “An examination, just like an entrance-examination for college. Hold an exam that is open to the public. It can be split into two rounds or three rounds. Use the most objective method to select the elite.”

“But...” Audrey knew what sort of objection this would entail.

Before she had the chance to arrange her thoughts, Klein continued, “After which, use these elites to fill the positions of the Cabinet, the county government, the city government, and the various towns. Yes, the positions that are directly handling matters, such as the Secretary of the Cabinet.

“Different positions should be given different requirements. The second or third rounds can be tested based on locale and region. Professional matters should be left to the professionals.

“As for political positions such as ministers, governors or mayors, they will be left to the parties that win the election. That is a slice of the pie they deserve.”

Alger, who lacked interest in such matters, unknowingly turned his head and listened carefully. Audrey frowned slightly as she fell into deep thought.

“There’s no hurry in replacing everyone at once. The cabinet and various agencies in the civil service will be crippled if that happens. You can have an examination every year or every three years. They can be gradually replaced. Finally, in light of the kingdom’s expansion and the salaried civil servants’

resignations that will bring in vacancies, you can systematically allot spots." Klein fully expressed his talent as a keyboard politician. He then faced his palm outwards and said, "Such a design can bring the kingdom's insightful elites into the government. Regardless of the party in power or who the minister is, the civil service will allow the kingdom to maintain its basic and effective operations."

Of course, a side effect was the birth of the undying devil that was bureaucracy.

While considering the suggestion, Audrey asked doubtfully, "Are you implying that even if those ministers become curly-haired baboons, the effects would be insignificant?"

"No," Alger interjected suddenly. "I believe that baboons are a better choice than the present ministers."

He paused before adding, "After all, baboons only need to eat, sleep, and mate. They would not come up with foolish ideas and insist on brainless projects."

Mr. Hanged Man, it sounds like you have quite a terrible superior... Klein sat at his seat of honor and shook his head in silent amusement.

Audrey ruminated over the suggestion Mr. Fool had offered and after a while, said in surprise, "It sounds like it actually might work...

"It's a very simple but effective solution!"

She looked at Klein and sincerely marveled, "Mr. Fool, you must be an elderly person with outstanding intelligence who is very experienced in life!"

... The corners of Klein's mouth twitched a little as he looked at the Hanged Man and Justice for a few silent seconds.

"Let us end today's gathering here."

If Miss Justice is able to influence her family and effect change on this matter, I can guide Benson ahead of time and give him a chance at becoming a civil servant.

On careful thought, Benson was indeed suitable for such a career.

However, it is unlikely Justice would take the initiative to do it. This is because the Hanged Man and I can easily find out which noble suggested it and basically guess her identity.

Of course, she could do it through a roundabout manner secretly. "By your will." Audrey and Alger

stood up together.

Klein leaned back slightly and severed the connection. He saw Justice and the Hanged Man's illusory and blurry figures instantly shatter and dissipate.

Above the gray fog, in the opulent palace where gods seemingly lived, he was the only one sitting silently at the head of the bronze table.

Klein did not plunge into the gray fog like the other time to leave. This was because his mind was still energetic enough after becoming a Beyonder.

The reason why he had ended the Tarot Club early was because he learned the true attitude the Nighthawks had towards the Antigonus notebook. He decided that he had to search for it seriously and not sleep all the way. Doing so would make Dunn Smith suspicious of his activities at home.

Furthermore, he had benefited quite a lot this time.

Klein sat on the high-back chair at the head of the bronze table. His arms leaned on the armrest as he crossed his fingers while he observed the boundless gray fog carefully. He found the place serene as though no one had stepped into it for ten million years.

When he established the connection to summon the Hanged Man and Justice, he acutely noticed something.

That was the fact that as a Beyonder himself, he had the ability to touch another dark red star!

“Does this mean I can summon one more?” Klein recalled the feeling and muttered in confirmation.

However, he did not have the urge to make an attempt since he did not know what the identity of the newcomer would be or what sort of attitude they would have. After all, not everyone was like Justice or the Hanged Man who had unique personalities that easily blended in and took whatever they needed. They even seemed willing to conceal matters. If he pulled someone like Dunn Smith, then the mysterious organization he had just established would instantly come under the watch of the church.

As an “evil” organization’s boss, his future would be worrying.

Klein knew that the gray fog was special. He knew it was not something a Beyonder at Dunn Smith’s Sequence could see through. But the problem was that since he had the powers of a Beyonder, he had to consider the existence of the gods.

Klein had chosen to carefully believe that the seven orthodox gods existed in reality. Of course, he was more tenable to the belief that these gods were just more powerful than highSequence Beyonders. Furthermore, they were under strict limitations. At the very least, ever since the Fifth Epoch, apart from a few oracles, they have not appeared again.

“Heh, forcefully pulling people here isn’t a good thing. No one would wish to be pulled into mystery for some baffling reason... Let’s wait and see how things go in the future...” Klein sighed and stood up.

He released his spirituality and sensed his body’s existence. Then, he began imitating the heavy feeling of rapidly plunging down.

The scenes in front of him changed. The gray fog and dark red instantly departed him. Klein felt like he had torn through endless water membranes before ultimately seeing the real world, his room in darkness.

This time, he was fully awake and seriously took in the entire experience.

“Strange... There are some differences between the gray fog and the spirit world...” Klein moved his limbs and felt the existence of his body.

After he seriously thought through the experience, he shook his head, walked to the desk and pulled open the curtains.

Whoosh!

The curtains were drawn as sunlight poured in, illuminating the room.

As he looked at the street outside the oriel window and the pedestrians going back and forth, Klein took a deep breath and muttered silently, “It’s time to go out and work.

“How should I act as a Seer?”

“It cannot be rushed... All I can do is use Spirit Vision now...”

...

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey Hall looked at herself in the mirror. She saw her cheeks flushed red with excitement and her eyes, so bright that they would have daunted anyone from looking into them.

She did not examine any of this as she hurriedly recalled. She picked up the ruby-studded fountain pen and wrote the formula to the Spectator potion on the exquisite goatskin parchment.

“80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence, 13 grams of cow teeth paeonol powder. 7 petals of elf flowers. A matured Manhal Fish’s eyeball. 35 milliliters of goat-horned black fish blood.”

Phew... Audrey heaved a sigh of relief as she read it a few times to confirm that she had not made any mistakes.

She had the urge to dance again, but reminded herself to remain restrained.

After some thought, she began writing various chemical names around the potion’s formula. She then faked the page into complicated and messy chemistry.

Yes, as long as one doesn’t read it carefully, a person who flips through this randomly will not discover the details I have hidden in here... Excellent! Audrey praised herself and turned her mind towards the acquirement of the materials.

“I’ll first search the few vaults we have. I’ll then attempt to exchange for the missing parts with others...”

“If I still can’t gather them all, I can only seek help from the Hanged Man or the Fool... What can I offer as payment?”

After some thought, Audrey closed the notebook and placed it on a tiny bookshelf. Following that, she briskly walked to the door and pulled it open.

A golden retriever was sitting obediently outside.

The corners of Audrey’s mouth curled as she revealed a radiant smile.

“Susie, you completed the mission perfectly!”

“In the serialized stories in the newspapers, detectives would often have a capable assistant. I think there should be a huge dog supporting a real Spectator~”

...

In an underground basement lit only by a flickering candle, Alger Wilson raised his palm and looked at it carefully.

After a long while, he let out a sigh.

“It’s still that miraculous. I was unable to figure out any specific details at all...”

Despite having made sufficient preparations, he failed to understand how the Fool had completed the summoning...

He moved his gaze down and looked at the goatskin parchment on the table in front of him.

At the title head of the yellowish-brown parchment, there was a Hermes sentence written in dark blue ink.

“7. Seafarer.”

CHAPTER 37: THE CLUB

Under the scorching afternoon sun, Klein left his house.

Since he had to walk all the way from Iron Cross Street to Welch's place, he wore a linen shirt instead of his formal attire of top hat and leather boots. He wore a matching brown coat, a round felt hat and a pair of old leather shoes. That way, he did not need to worry that the stench of his sweat would contaminate the rather expensive suit.

As he went down Daffodil Street, he strolled toward Iron Cross Street. When he passed by the square around the corner, he subconsciously took a glance.

The tents had already vanished. The circus troupe from before had left after finishing their performance.

Klein originally imagined the animal trainer who had helped him tell his fortune to be a hidden expert. He believed she had purposely appeared to guide him after discovering something unique about him and that she would meet him and provide hints for the future. However, none of that happened. She left for the next stop in the tour with the circus troupe.

How can there be so many cliched tropes... Klein shook his head while grimacing a smile. He turned toward Iron Cross Street.

Iron Cross Street was not characterized by just a single street. Like its name suggested, it was formed by two roads that crossed each other.

With the intersection at its core, it was split into Left Street, Right Street, Upper Street, and Lower Street. Klein, Benson, and Melissa previously lived on Lower Street.

However, the residents living at his former apartment and the surrounding area did not think of the area as Lower Street. Instead, they created the term Middle Street. By doing so, they made a clear difference between those staying there and the poor who lived two hundred meters down the road.

There, a bedroom was occupied by five or six people, and sometimes even up to ten.

Klein walked along the periphery of Left Street as he let his mind wander. He recalled the Antigonus family's notebook and how it was missing. He thought of its importance to the Nighthawks and thought of the deaths that resulted from it.

His heart slowly turned heavy as his face turned ashen.

At that moment, a familiar voice sounded.

"Lad."

Oh... Klein turned his head curiously and found himself by Smyrin Bakery's entrance. Mrs. Wendy with a head of gray hair was greeting him with a wave and a warm smile.

"You don't look... very happy?" Wendy asked genially.

Klein rubbed his face and said, "A little."

"Regardless of your worries, tomorrow will always come," said Mrs. Wendy with a smile. "Here, try out my newly created sweet iced tea. I'm not sure if it suits the palate of the locals."

"Locals? Aren't you one, Mrs. Smyrin?" Klein shook his head in amusement.

Trying out something means it's free, right?

Wendy Smyrin raised her chin a little and said, "You guessed right. I'm actually a Southerner. I came to Tingen with my husband, but that was more than forty years ago. Heh heh, back then, Benson was not born yet. Even your parents did not know each other.

“I have always been a little unaccustomed to the dietary preferences of Northerners and I’m always missing my hometown’s food. I miss pork sausages, potato bread, roasted pancakes, vegetables fried in lard, and roasted meat with specialty sauces.”

“Oh, and I also miss sweet iced tea...”

Klein suffused a smile when he heard that.

“Mrs. Smyrin, this sure is a topic that makes me hungry... But I feel a lot better. Thank you very much.”

“Delicacies can always cure sorrow.” Wendy handed him a cup of brownish-red liquid. “This is sweet iced tea I made according to

my memories. Try it and tell me if it’s nice.”

After thanking her, Klein took a sip and found it resembling iced black tea from Earth. However, it was not as stimulating. The taste of tea was stronger and felt more refreshing. It instantly expelled the heat brought by the burning sun.

“It’s excellent!” he marveled.

“That puts me at ease.” Wendy smiled with squinted eyes as she watched him finish the cup of tea in a genial manner.

After chatting with Mrs. Smyrin about his moving, Klein returned to the street he was most familiar with.

There were far fewer streetside hawkers in the afternoon. They gathered again after half past five. The ones that stayed behind looked drowsy and listless.

The moment he entered the area, Klein’s heart suddenly felt overwhelmed by darkness. His heart felt heavy, down, and gloomy for an inexplicable reason.

What’s happening? He sharply sensed something wrong about himself. He immediately stopped and observed his surroundings, but did not see anything strange.

After some thought, Klein raised his hand and tapped his glabella like he was thinking.

The extent of his vision immediately transformed. The auras of the hawkers and pedestrians all appeared.

Before Klein could observe the colors of their health, his attention was pulled away by the colors that represented gloominess.

He was unable to determine the exact thoughts of the observed, but the despondent, apathetic, and gloomy impression was deeply carved into his heart.

As he surveyed the area, he realized that even the sun could not disperse those dark colors.

It was a sense of gloom that tainted them from years of repression.

Upon seeing this, Klein instantly understood the reason.

Just as Old Neil said, activating his Spirit Vision easily pulled him into unfamiliar environments and made him feel discomfort. It was also easy for himself to be affected by the emotions of others.

A similar principle could be used on an ability like perception. This was an ability he obtained without additional practice after becoming a Seer. It was a passive sense that could not be declined. It allowed him to directly sense the existence of anything abnormal.

There was bound to be a level of interaction when perceiving things; therefore, in the Beyonder eyes of someone like a Spirit Medium, the intensity of everyone’s perception is clear. It is like a fire in the night. Therefore, people with high perceptivity were naturally affected by the intense atmosphere of anything abnormal. It could only be repeatedly practiced to grasp, control, and adapt to such outcomes.

“Such a repressed color is probably formed over extended periods of time, right?” Klein sighed as he shook his head, feeling somewhat affected.

He tapped his glabella twice again and tried hard to converge his spirituality.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein walked toward the apartment and sensed for any abnormal existences or tiny connections while also searching for the Antigonus family’s notebook which “he” had hidden.

The streets were the same as usual. There was filthy water and trash on the streets. It only cleared up when he reached the apartment’s entrance.

Klein pushed open the half-closed door and circled the first floor in the darkness that the sunlight could not reach.

The wooden stairs creaked constantly as he went up them.

The second floor was as dim as always. Klein released his perception and looked into the darkness.

However, not only did he fail to discover any clues regarding his notebook, he even failed to see any invisible spiritual bodies.

“If it’s so easy to encounter them, most ordinary people would not have already sensed the existence of extraordinary matters...” Klein sighed in reflection.

He had already understood that most “spirits” did not exist in the form of spiritual bodies, but in the form of spirituality. Only a Spirit Medium could effectively communicate with them.

After circling the third floor once, Klein left the apartment and retraced his memory’s footsteps towards Welch’s place.

He walked for a full hour but did not discover anything along the way.

Standing outside the gardened bungalow, Klein looked at the building through the locked iron gates and mumbled to himself, “There’s no need for me to search Welch’s place, right? Captain and Madam Daly must have done a carpet search of the place...

“Besides, I don’t have the key. They can’t expect me to climb the walls, right...

“I’ll try another path tomorrow...

“I’ve walked so much today, but there are no step counter rankings...”

While lampooning, Klein returned to the nearby district. He planned on taking a public carriage to Blackthorn Security Company to retrieve his daily allocation of thirty bullets. He needed to make use of his time and practice.

A Seer’s lack of quick and effective offensive means could only be made up with his revolver and cane!

The district around Welch’s place was relatively clean. Shops with clean and bright windows lined the two sides of the street.

At the turn of the street, Klein was just about to seek out the carriage stop when his gaze swept past a few signboards on the second floor.

“Harrods Department Store.”

“Military Veterans Mess.”

“Divination Club.”

...

Divination Club... Klein silently repeated the name and recalled that he had to ‘act’ as a Seer.

Yes, I should take a look... and seek out new ideas...

Amid his mixed thoughts, Klein went across the street and went to the second floor. He entered the main foyer to see a beautiful female attendant.

The woman with coiled brownish-yellow hair sized up Klein before saying with a smile, “Sir, do you wish to have your fortune told, or do you wish to join our club?”

“What are the conditions for entry?” asked Klein casually.

The woman explained with great familiarity, “Fill in your particulars and pay an annual membership fee. The first year is five pounds and subsequent years will be one pound a year. Don’t worry, we are not like political or business clubs which allow entry through recommendations from formal members.

“Members can freely use the club’s meeting room and various divination rooms and tools. They can enjoy the coffee and tea we provide and read the newspapers and magazines we subscribe for free. They can buy lunch, dinner, and alcoholic beverages at cost price, as well as education materials and materials needed for divination.

“In addition, we invite at least one famous fortune-teller to lecture every month to answer any questions.

“Most importantly, you can find a bunch of friends with the same hobbies and have an exchange with them.”

It sounds pretty good, but... I do not have the money... Klein gave a self-deprecating smile before asking, “Then what if I want my fortune told?”

Upon hearing Klein's question, the beautiful lady with elegantly tied-up brownish-yellow hair appeared to lose her patience. However, she maintained her smile and said, "Our members are free to do divination for others in the club. They also have their prices and we take a very tiny cut as a fee. If you wish to have your fortune told, you can take a look at this album. It has introductions and rates of the members who are willing to do divination for others."

"However, it's Monday afternoon, so most of our members are busy at work. We only have five here today..."

As she introduced the club, she invited Klein to have a seat on the sofa beside a window in the reception hall. Then, she flipped through the album and pointed out the present club members.

"Hanass Vincent. Famous Tingen fortune-teller. The club's resident mentor. Good at various forms of divination. He charges four soli each time."

It's really expensive... That's enough to feed Benson, Melissa, and me to two sumptuous dinners... Klein clicked his tongue silently and did not reply.

When the woman saw this, she continued flipping the page and introducing one member after another.

"...And the final one, Glacis. A member who joined the club this year. He is skilled in tarot divination. He charges two pence each time.

"Sir, who do you plan on choosing?"

Klein did not stand on ceremony and answered, "Mr. Glacis."

"..." The female attendant fell silent for two seconds before saying, "Sir, I have to remind you that Mr. Glacis is only considered a novice."

"I understand. I will be responsible for my own decision." Klein nodded with a smile.

"...Then please follow me." The woman stood up and led Klein through a door beside the reception hall.

It was not a very long corridor and an open meeting room was situated at its end. There was enough sunlight and it was equipped with tables and chairs. There were newspapers, magazines, and paper cards. A faint coffee aroma drifted out.

About two rooms from the meeting room, the attendant gestured for Klein to stop. She sped up her pace and entered the room. She shouted gently, "Mr. Glacis, someone wishes for your

divination."

"Me?" A voice filled with surprise and doubt immediately sounded. Following that, there was the sound of a chair moving.

"Yes, which divination room would you like to use?" replied the lady without any emotion.

"Topaz Room. I like topaz." Glacis appeared by the meeting room's door and looked curiously at Klein who was waiting not far away.

He was a man in his thirties; his skin was slightly dark and his pupils were a dark green shade. Under his light, yellow and soft hair, he was dressed in a white shirt and black vest. A monocle hung from his chest and he seemed to have a good disposition.

The attendant did not say anything further as she opened the door to the Topaz Room which was next to the meeting room.

The curtains inside were tightly shut, making it dim. It appeared that only by doing so would one gain revelations from the gods and spirits to obtain an accurate divination outcome.

“Hello there. I’m Glacis. I never expected you to choose me for your divination.” Glacis gave a gentleman’s bow, briskly stepped into the room, and sat behind a long table. “Frankly, I’m only attempting divination for others. I do not have much experience. For now, I’m not a good fortune-teller. You still have a chance for regret.”

After Klein returned the bow, he entered and closed the door behind him.

By the light seeping through the curtains, he said with a smile, “You are a really honest man, but I’m someone who is very firm on his choices.”

“Please have a seat.” Glacis pointed at the seat in front of him and thought for a few seconds. “Divination is my hobby. Heh heh. In life, one often receives guidance from the divine, but the ordinary person is unable to accurately understand the meaning. This is the reason why divination exists and also why I joined this club. In this aspect, I still lack confidence. Let’s make the divination that follows an exchange, a free exchange. How do you like my suggestion? I’ll cover the fees the club requires. It’s just a quarterpence.”

Klein did not agree or shake his head. Instead, he smiled.

“From the looks of it, you have a pretty well-paying and decent job.”

While he said so, he leaned his body forward slightly. He held his forehead with his right fist and tapped at it twice.

“But that does not enhance the accuracy of my divination,” answered Glacis humorously. “Does your head hurt? Do you want to divine problems regarding health?”

“A little. I wish to divine where an item is.” Klein had already thought of an excuse as he slowly leaned back.

In his eyes, Glacis’s aura clearly presented itself. The orange colors by his lungs were dark and sparse. They even influenced the brightness in other areas.

This is not a symptom of exhaustion... Klein nodded in an indiscernible manner.

“Are you searching for a lost item?” Glacis thought for a few seconds before saying, “Then let’s do a simple determination.”

He pushed the neatly stacked tarot cards on the black table toward Klein.

“Calm down. Think of that item and ask yourself ‘can it still be found.’ While doing so, shuffle and cut the deck.”

“Alright.” Klein actually did not remember what the ancient notebook looked like. All he could do was repeat the question to himself: *Can the Antigonus family’s notebook still be found?*

While he repeated the thought, he skillfully shuffled and cut the deck.

Glacis picked the topmost card and pushed it in front of Klein. The card was facing down horizontally.

“Turn it clockwise until it sits vertical. Then flip it open. If the card is inverted, which means the picture on the card is facing away from you, it indicates that the item cannot be found. If the card is upright, then we can continue the divination and seek its actual location.”

Klein followed his instructions and turned the horizontal card vertical.

He clasped the end of the tarot card and flipped it over.

It was an inverted card.

“What a pity.” Glacis sighed.

Klein did not respond because his attention was focused on the tarot card in front of him.

The inverted card’s picture was dressed in gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress—The Fool!

It's The Fool again? It can't be so coincidental, right... According to the Hanged Man and Old Neil, divination is the outcome of the communication of spirituality and the spirit world with a higherdimensional "me." Tarot cards are only a convenient tool to read what the truth symbolizes. In theory, using any divination item doesn't matter as it doesn't affect the outcome... Klein frowned as he thought for a moment.

"Can it be divined whether the item is already in the hands of others?"

"Of course. Follow the same procedure and do it again." Glacis nodded with rich interest.

Klein shuffled and cut the deck while thinking of his question.

He drew a card and placed it horizontally before turning it vertical clockwise. He finished all the preparations with a serious expression.

Taking a deep breath, Klein reached out his hand and flipped over the tarot card.

Please do not be The Fool again...

While praying, he suddenly relaxed because the card was that of The Star and it was inverted!

"From the looks of it, the item has not been taken by others yet," interpreted Glacis with a smile.

Klein nodded and raised his right hand. He tapped his glabella, looking as though he was deep in thought. Then, he took out two pennies with a dark copper luster from his pocket and pushed it towards Glacis.

"Didn't I say it was free?" Glacis said with a frown.

Klein laughed as he got up.

"This is the respect divination deserves."

"Alright, thank you for your generosity." Glacis stood up and reached out his hand.

After shaking his hand, Klein took two steps back and turned around. He walked to the door and twisted the doorknob.

Just as he was about to leave, he suddenly turned his head and made a terse sound.

"Mr. Glacis, I suggest that you see a doctor as soon as possible. Focus on your lungs."

"Why?" asked Glacis in surprise.

Are you cursing me because you aren't pleased with the divination results?

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "It's a symptom based on the color of your face. You, well... your glabella seems dark.

[1]"

"Glabella seems dark..." It was the first time Glacis was hearing such a description.

Klein did not explain further as he walked out the room with a smile. He closed the wooden door behind him.

"Is he an unlicensed doctor or a herbalist?" Glacis shook his head, amused. He then picked up his monocle for divination.

On careful look, he realized his glabella was indeed dark.

But this was a problem of the environment. In the darkness due to the closed curtains, not only was his glabella dark, his entire face was shrouded in darkness!

"It's not a very likable joke." Glacis muttered.

He worriedly divined his own health to make sure that everything was alright.

...

After leaving the Divination Club, Klein had an additional plan for the future.

It was to save as much money as possible to pay the annual fee to become a member of the club. After which, he could begin acting as a Seer.

As for why he did not choose to do it independently, it was because he temporarily lacked the resources and channels. He could not bring himself to stand on the streets as a hawker since he cared for his reputation.

A few minutes later, the public carriage arrived. He spent two pence and reached Zouteland Street which was not very far off.

He pushed open the door to Blackthorn Security Company but did not see the familiar brown-haired girl. He only saw the blackhaired, green-eyed Leonard Mitchell with his poetic bearing behind the reception counter.

"Good afternoon. Where's Rozanne?" Klein asked after taking off his hat and bowing.

Leonard smiled and pointed at the partition.

"It's her shift tonight at the armory."

Without waiting for Klein to ask another question, Leonard said as though he was pondering over a matter, "Klein, I have a question that has always puzzled me." "What is it?" Klein wore a blank look.

Leonard stood up and smilingly said with a relaxed tone, "Why did Welch and Naya commit suicide on the spot while you returned home?"

"It likely has to do with how the unknown existence made me take the Antigonus family's notebook away to hide it," answered Klein with the official surmise.

Leonard paced around before turning to look straight into Klein's eyes.

"If your suicide was meant to silence you and wipe out any clues, why weren't you made to destroy the notebook there and then?"

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1. This is a classic Chinese saying to someone. It usually implies an ominous portent.

In fact, I do not know if the notebook is destroyed or hidden... but by using backward reasoning, if it is to be destroyed, it could have been done on the spot. There was no need for me to take it away to carry out the destruction...

Upon hearing Leonard's question, Klein instantly went into keyboard detective mode and said with a sigh, "Perhaps when Welch, Naya, and I made contact with the unknown existence, it enjoyed the sacrifice of life or wished for similar situations to continue. With the suicide definitely easily discoverable, I was made to take away the notebook to hide it so as to prepare for the existence's second round of entertainment. However, some mishap happened during the process and I failed to succeed in my suicide."

This was a reasoned guess Klein made from his consumption of novels, movies, and TV dramas which involved cult sacrifices.

As for the mishap that happened midway, he knew very well that it was due to the unexpected variable of him being a transmigrator.

"Quite a good explanation, but I believe there might be other possibilities. Welch's and Naya's suicide sacrifice might have made it possible for the unknown existence to descend on this world. Then, that notebook is a vessel or a breeding ground for evil. It made you take it away to hide it, worried that we would destroy it if we discovered its birth—before it became strong." Leonard Mitchell suggested another possibility.

Having said that, he stared into Klein's eyes and smiled slightly. "Of course, perhaps the notebook has been destroyed. The goal is to hide its content, to conceal the vessel or the brooding of evil. That way, there is a sufficient reason for your failed suicide."

What does he mean? Is he suspecting me? Is he suspecting that the original Klein's body is a vessel or used for the brooding of evil? No, what he's being a vessel for is a transmigrator... Actually, "Brooding" isn't a correct term. Klein was taken aback. While he secretly criticized the idea, he weighed his words.

"I will not try to defend myself since I've lost memories from that period. Be it Captain or Madam Daly, they have already confirmed that I'm fine. Your joke isn't funny."

"I'm only considering a possibility. It does not eliminate the blow the unknown existence encountered when it descended which caused your suicide to fail. We believe that the Goddess will ultimately bless us." Leonard laughed as he changed the subject. "Did you discover anything in the afternoon?"

After the conversation and the previous encounters, Klein was very wary of Leonard. He answered in a composed manner, "No. I plan on trying a different route tomorrow afternoon."

He pointed to the partition and said, "I'll need to head to the armory to draw the bullets."

The Shooting Club opened to nine at night. After all, its availability increased only after many of its members got off work.

"May Goddess bless you." Leonard smiled as he gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

He watched Klein pass through the partition and listened to his footsteps down the stairs. Leonard's smile gradually vanished as a look of doubt appeared in his green eyes.

He whispered something with a displeased tone.

...

Down the stairs, Klein followed the gas lamp-illuminated corridor to the armory and archives.

The iron door was open and the brown-haired Rozanne was standing in front of the table. She was chatting with a top hatwearing middle-aged man with a thick black beard.

“Good afternoon, no. Good evening. It’s always night here. Klein, I heard from Old Neil that you have become a Beyonder? It’s called Seer?” Rozanne turned her head and deluged him with her questions.

She did not hide her curiosity and concern.

Klein nodded with a smile.

“Good afternoon, Miss Rozanne. It’s indeed always night here, but it makes one feel a sense of serenity. The description you gave wasn’t accurate enough. It should be said that the Sequence potion I consumed has the name Seer.”

“You still chose to become a Beyonder after all...” Rozanne said with a sigh as she fell into a deep thought.

Klein looked at the middle-aged man beside her and asked politely, “You are?”

Another Nighthawk member or one of the other two civilian staff I have not met?

Rozanne puckered her lips and said, “Bredt. Our colleague. He wishes to change slots with me to free up the night after tomorrow. He plans on going to the theater in the North Borough with his wife to watch The Prideful One. It’s to celebrate their fifteenth-year wedding anniversary. He’s truly a romantic gentleman.”

Bredt smiled as he extended his hand and said, “With Miss Rozanne around, there’s nothing that requires repeating. Hello, Klein. I never expected you to become a Beyonder so quickly. As for me, heh, I might never have the courage.”

“Perhaps it’s as the saying goes, the ignorant knows no fear,” Klein said in a self-deprecating manner as he extended his hand to shake Bredt’s.

“Me not having courage is not something bad,” said Bredt with a shake of his head. “A Beyonder once told me before his death to never probe strange and dangerous matters. The less you know, the longer you live.”

At that moment, Rozanne interjected, “Klein, there’s no need to mind it. I heard from Old Neil that as a Seer, you are used as support. It’s relatively safe as long as you do not attempt to communicate with unknown existences. Why are you dressed in such clothes? It’s so unbecoming of a gentleman! What are you here for?”

“I’m here to draw my thirty bullets.” Klein did not reply to Rozanne’s first question.

He believed that the lady would quickly forget the matter.

“Alright.” Rozanne pointed at the table and said, “Bredt, it’s all yours. You should know where the keys and bullets are. Oh, Old Neil really is petty. He did not even leave his hand ground coffee behind. He promised me that I could drink my fill today...” She prattled on as Klein received the bullets.

The duo left together and went their separate ways at Zouteland Street. One took a public carriage home while the other walked into the Shooting Club.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Klein repeated the process—gripping the gun, raising his arms, shooting, releasing the cylinder, ejecting the empty shells, and stuffing in rounds—again and again. He became familiar with the process and built it into his muscle memory.

Of course, he had a few breaks in between to review and correct the process.

After finishing his practice, Klein used the grounds to do various exercises like push-ups. He worked hard to train his body to improve his physique.

Once everything was over, he sat in an untracked carriage home. Only then he realized it was nearing seven and the sky was already dark.

Just as Klein was planning to head to the market or streets to buy the ingredients for dinner, the door opened. Melissa had returned with her stationery-filled bag.

Apart from that, she carried quite a lot of groceries.

"...I thought you and Benson would be home rather late. This morning, I took out 1 soli from the place where you stash your money." Upon seeing her brother's questioning look, Melissa explained in her usual serious manner.

"Since you took the money, why didn't you take the public carriage to school?" Klein had been reminded of the matter from the morning.

Melissa said with a frown, "Why should I take a public carriage. It costs four pence to get to school. A return trip means eight pence. Counting Benson and you, we will be spending twentyfour pence on transportation daily. That's a whole two soli! In a week, yes, without counting Sunday, that's still twelve soli. It's almost equal to our rent."

Stop, stop, stop! Don't flaunt your mathematical prowess... Klein lowered his palm in an amused manner.

Melissa first stopped before adding, "It's pretty good walking to school. Our teacher said that everyone should exercise frequently. Besides, I can pick some damaged components on the way."

Klein chuckled and said, "Then let's do the math again. The public carriage costs twelve soli. The rent is twelve soli and three pence. It's a total of one pound, four soli and three pence. Using Benson's salary is enough to pay for it and there will be quite a bit of change left. Yes, he received last week's salary... As for me, I can still earn one pound ten soli every week. Even if we eat meat every day while counting expenses like gas, charcoal, wood, and condiments, we would still have some left if we are frugal with lunch. We can even subscribe to the morning papers for just one penny."

"In two months, when I make up for the advanced payment, I can save money for both you and Benson. We can have new

clothes."

"But! But we have to think of the possible accidents." Melissa stayed firm on her point.

Klein smiled at her and said, "Then, we can eat less meat. Don't you find spending fifty, no, a hundred minutes on the road a waste of time? You could use that time to read more and think over problems and improve your results.

"That way, Melissa, you will graduate with excellent grades. You will be able to find a job with a pretty good salary. When that happens, what is there to worry about?"

"..."

He fully displayed his experience gained from debating with people on message boards and finally convinced Melissa. She agreed to take the public carriage to school.

Phew, I've finally suckered her into doing it. No, how can I call it suckering. This is called convincing... Klein lampooned before taking over the groceries that Melissa had bought. He said with a sigh, "Remember to buy beef or meat like mutton and chicken... Eat until you're full and enjoy yourself. Only then will you be equipped with a healthy body and a clever brain to match the demanding requirements needed for your studies."

Just mentioning it makes me salivate...

Melissa puckered her lips and after a few seconds of silence, said, "Alright."

...

The next morning, after ensuring that Melissa took a public carriage, Klein and Benson separated and went to their respective companies.

The moment Klein stepped into the door, he saw Old Neil and Rozanne chatting by the reception desk. The former was still in his classic black robe, without any concern for the gazes of others. The latter had changed into a casual cream-colored dress.

“Good morning, Mr. Neil, Miss Rozanne,” greeted Klein as he took off his hat.

Old Neil gave him a mischievous look.

“Good morning, you did not hear anything you shouldn’t have heard last night, right?”

“No, I slept very well.” Klein was also quite puzzled over that.

He could only put it down to his inadequate perception...

“Haha, don’t mind that. Actually, it’s not that easily heard.” Old

Neil pointed to the partition and said, “Go to the armory. We will continue our mysticism lessons this morning.”

Klein nodded and followed Old Neil down the stairs and arrived at the armory to replace Bredt who had been on duty the entire night.

“What will we be learning today?” asked Klein curiously.

Old Neil dragged out his response and said, “The complicated and basic knowledge. But before that, let me teach you an interesting trick.”

He pointed at the silver chain on his wrist. There was a pure moonstone hanging from the chain.

"An interesting trick?"

Klein asked out of extreme curiosity.

Old Neil chuckled and said, "I'll complete my patrol of the armory, storeroom, and archives. Use the two cups on the table to make two cups of coffee. In one of the cups, put something unpleasant. As for what it is, you can decide for yourself. Use your imagination. The only request from me is to not waste too much coffee powder. Those are coffee beans grown on the Feynapotter plateau and hand ground by me!"

"Alright." Although Klein was unsure what Old Neil was up to, he happily agreed to it.

He watched him open the iron gates to the armory with a copper key and then heard the echoing footsteps inside. Slowly, he settled the cups down and confirmed that there was still hot water in the kettle.

He removed the silver tin can's lid and using a tiny spoon with a metallic sheen, Klein scooped a spoonful of rich aromatic coffee powder into each of the two cups. Then, he poured in the hot water and stirred it.

As a transmigrator who came from an era abundant in resources, he was no stranger to coffee. However, it was only limited to instant coffee.

After finishing the task, Klein pondered for a moment and sat down. He crossed his right leg and took some of the mud which had stained the bottom of his leather boots and placed it in the left cup.

Then, he carefully stirred it again until the colors and smells of the two cups of coffee were practically indistinguishable.

A few minutes later, Old Neil walked out the armory while swinging his keys. He then closed the iron gates with a clang.

"Are you done?" He turned his slightly turbid dark red eyes over and looked at Klein across the table.

"Yes," replied Klein with a nod.

Old Neil chuckled and removed the silver chain around his wrist and sat down.

His expression quickly turned serene. He held out his chainholding left hand and allowed it to hang over the coffee cup to his right. The moonstone nearly touched the liquid.

Amid the relaxing calmness, the moonstone trembled suddenly. It began spinning the chain in a counterclockwise manner.

"This cup is the one with the unpleasant thing," said Old Neil surely.

Without waiting for Klein to confirm, he put away the silver chain and picked up the other cup of coffee and took a sip.

"Do you like bitter coffee? I'm used to having a tablespoon of sugar and a tablespoon of milk."

Klein did not reply but instead asked with his interest piqued, "Your divination sure is accurate. Was it because of the moonstone? That was moonstone, right?"

"This is known as pendulum dowsing in divination. It's also called spirit dowsing. It relies on your own Astral Projection's connection with the spirit world and the cosmos to communicate with spiritual intelligence through the aid of natural materials such as crystals, gems, or special metals. The good and bad of things can be divined... Let's talk about the two cups of coffee. A counterclockwise motion implies bad, while a clockwise motion is good. If it doesn't move, it's neither good nor bad. You can write the statement on a piece of paper. Take note, it's a statement and not a question." Old Neil put down the cup of coffee and explained in detail.

Klein asked as though he was thinking, “Does that mean one shouldn’t use questioning sentences?”

“Yes, you cannot use “is so-and-so willing to be my fiancée,’ but you should instead use ‘so-and-so is willing to be my fiancée.’ Write it on a piece of paper and place it on the desk. Then use your dominant hand to hold the pendulum chain. Take note, use your dominant hand,” said Old Neil with a chuckle. “When doing so, keep your arm straight. Adjust the chain’s length and make the moonstone hang just above the piece of paper to the point of almost touching what we wrote. Then, close your eyes and repeat the sentence seven times in your mind. Open your eyes when you are done and see if the spirit pendulum turns or not. If it doesn’t, close your eyes again and repeat the process until it moves.”

Klein nodded slightly and asked, “Counterclockwise means ‘no,’ and clockwise means ‘yes?’”

“It can also be interpreted as success or failure,” corrected Old Neil. He taught Klein the other usages and details of spirit pendulum divination.

Klein pondered over the matter and discovered that it was a very useful divination trick. For instance, he could quickly use it in an unfamiliar environment to determine if the food he was offered was poisonous or not. He did not need any additional knowledge of field biology.

Of course, such divination methods were overly simple. The answers he could receive were limited to two or three. There was no way for deeper investigation or interpretation. For example, although something could be harmful to the body, it could become very beneficial after some processing. An example was certain foods. They were indeed damaging to the body, but nothing serious. If one was on the brink of starving, eating it would not be a huge problem. These were things that spirit dowsing could not determine.

“I will have to quickly save money to buy crystals or pure silver to create a spirit pendulum...” Klein sighed.

Old Neil looked at him in puzzlement.

“You can apply for one directly. This is a standard issue for Beyonders, especially Beyonders like us who take on a support role. There’s still a topaz and pure silver spirit pendulum in the armory.”

“But I’m still not a formal member of the team...” Klein’s heart palpitated in excitement, but he felt a little hesitant.

Old Neil chuckled and said, “For Beyonders, regardless of whether they are formal members or not, they have to be provided with conveniences in other areas since there’s no pay rise.”

“Maybe the word ‘perk’ is more suitable. I’ll apply with Captain later!” Klein clenched his fists secretly as he made up his mind.

How was he to know if Captain would approve his request without trying?

“Alright,” said Old Neil with a smile. “We can officially begin our mysticism curriculum. The basics consist of symbolism. Do you know what symbolism means?”

Klein recalled the bits and pieces he had heard and the things he had seen and heard from his spirit world and the gray fog. He deliberated and said, “Regardless of the spirit world or the illusory cosmos, as well as the unknown realms, they are beyond our sensory world. It’s not something that can be accurately described by the information our ears, nose, and eyes obtain. What we obtain are simply indescribable experiences and direct revelations. They also appear as abstract characters or pictorial symbols. These symbols represent different items and different meanings.”

“Very accurate. As expected of a Seer.” Old Neil nodded solemnly. “Only by grasping the ability to interpret the symbols can you really take the next step into the world of mysticism. Yes, the pictures on tarot cards and each of the elements in the pictures are symbols. They are man-made symbols that help us understand and interpret primordial revelations.”

He pulled out a piece of paper and picked up a fountain pen beside him. He drew a short curve.

Following that, he added a few vertical lines beneath the curve.

He looked up at Klein and asked, “Do you know what this symbol represents?”

Klein looked at it for quite a while before saying hesitatingly, “Eyelashes?”

“...” Old Neil exhaled. “This is the symbol of the Bumper Harvest constellation. This is the Thunderous constellation, and this is the Frost constellation...”

He casually drew a few more symbols.

As Klein memorized them, he could not help but comment, “The names of these constellations are really... especially unsophisticated. Yes, unsophisticated!” *How tacky and primordial...*

Old Neil revealed a smile.

“Emperor Roselle thought the same back then. He always had the intention of changing the constellation names to things like Virgo, Cancer, and Scorpio. Unfortunately, he did not have the strength to go against tradition. At the very least, these constellations’ old names and the corresponding dates that they represent guide farming and harvests.”

“I have to say that Emperor Roselle sure is a person with ideas.” Klein was at a loss for words.

Yes, Emperor Roselle was likely a decent person when he was alive...

Old Neil was unable to understand Klein’s humor as he continued explaining the various basic symbols, such as the various constellations, the sun, the crimson moon, the Brown Planet, the Scarlet Planet, and the Blue Planet.

While talking about these, he would teach Klein how to draw the divination astrolabe and indicate what things to pay attention to. He also taught the materials and creation of a crystal ball, and the choice of incantations. The teachings overwhelmed Klein.

If not for his discovery that the Seer potion had improved his memory slightly, he would have long asked Old Neil to stop to aid his digesting of the information.

“That’s all for today’s mysticism class. Think over it yourself and ask me if you have any questions.” Old Neil took out a gold pocket watch and opened it with a snap to check the time. “Do not forget to read the historical documents I prepared for you. To be frank, I feel fear seeing them.”

“Alright.” Klein took the pieces of paper that were sketched with symbols by Old Neil. He quickly went through the mysticism knowledge he learned today to prevent himself from forgetting it.

Old Neil took a sip of a newly brewed cup of coffee and said, “Memory itself won’t do. You have to use it often. That way, you can make the knowledge instinctual. Also, Cogitation has to be carried on every day. Only more practice and usage will allow you to grasp the power of the potion, digging into the mysteries it hides away and removing its unpleasant effects.

With this raised, Klein recalled acting and the Divination Club. He probed, “My potion’s abilities are related to divination. Practicing by myself will not do. I need to make contact with lots of people and divine for them to quickly grasp it. I plan on joining the Divination Club after having some spare cash—the one on Howes Street in North Borough—to become a real Seer.”

This was not something he could hide from the Nighthawks in the future. It was better to prepare them.

“Your idea is very similar to Daly’s. She has always clamored to be a real Spirit Medium.” Old Neil shook his head and laughed. “But why must you wait till you have spare cash? You can apply to Dunn and get him to approve of the expenses!”

“Organizations like a Divination Club might also have cultists or members of evil organizations in them. As a civilian staff member of the Nighthawks and a standard Beyonder, your membership makes

it easy for us to monitor them. It's part of the job! We would regularly monitor these places, but as we lack manpower, we can't keep watch on them for long. Now, it can be handled to you."

I can do that? As he looked at Old Neil's serious expression, Klein was dumbfounded.

This is making an expense claim for private matters!

I know nothing about such matters...

Indeed, I'm just a keyboard warrior...

"You wish to use your own money to do this?" Old Neil smiled as he added when he saw Klein's face.

Klein immediately shook his head as he answered firmly, "I plan on reporting it to Captain!"

Old Neil nodded in satisfaction and looked at the cup of coffee with the unpleasant thing inside. It had not been poured away.

"What did you put in there?"

Klein smiled embarrassingly.

"It's just some dirt underneath my boots. Its color and your coffee powder looks almost the same."

Old Neil was taken aback as he suddenly clasped his mouth and

roared, "Why aren't you pouring it away yet!?"

CHAPTER 41: AUDREY AND HER SUSIE

After pouring away the coffee and returning to the armory to take the thick stack of historical materials and explanatory transcripts from Old Neil, Klein followed the wall of lights up the staircase to the Blackthorn Security Company.

Tap. Tap. Tap. His footsteps echoed in the sealed and quiet basement.

After Klein left the spiral staircase, he pushed open the door and identified his bearings before heading for the second office opposite of him.

After familiarizing himself for two days, he had a general understanding of the layout of the Blackthorn Security Company.

The entrance brought visitors to a huge reception hall with sofas and tables. Through the partition, there was an inner region. To the left of the corridor were three rooms. From the nearest to the furthest, they were Mrs. Orianna's account room, a rest room with a few sofa beds, and the staircase that led underground.

On the right were three rooms. From the nearest to the furthest was Captain Dunn Smith's office, a civilian staff office with a typewriter, and the recreation room for formal members of the Nighthawks team.

Klein had previously seen Leonard Mitchell playing cards with two other teammates in the recreation room. He guessed that they were playing Fighting the Landlord. Of course, Emperor Rochelle had already given it a new name—Fighting Evil. However, the way it was played was identical to what Klein knew.

Bredt was entitled to a day of sleep after a night shift. Rozanne was at the reception desk. The carriage driver who was in charge of procuring necessities and collecting supplies, Cesare Francis, was out as usual. When Klein opened the door to the civilian staff office, the three desks inside were empty. Only the typewriter sat there silently.

"Akerson Company's Model 1346 typewriter..." Klein, who had seen similar objects in his mentor's office and Welch's place, muttered. He felt that the complicated mechanisms inside were filled with the beauty of machinery.

He walked to the desk with the typewriter. After preparing himself, he attempted to type something on air.

In the beginning, he often converted the local language to Chinese 'pinyin' instinctively. Only after he was familiar with it did he 'digest' the original Klein's corresponding memory fragment and no longer made mistakes.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The rhythmic tapping on the typewriter sounded like a melody composed from the heavy marriage of metal and industry. Under this melody, Klein quickly typed the expenditure application.

However, he was in no hurry to meet Dunn Smith. Instead, he focused his mind and read the materials provided by Old Neil seriously. It was both revision and new material.

When it was almost noon, he stretched his neck and put away the documents. He then read and consolidated what he had learned on mysticism in the morning.

Only after all that did he take his application to the office next door and knocked on the door gently.

Dunn was waiting for lunch to be delivered. When he saw Klein hand him the document, the corners of his mouth curved up.

"Did Old Neil teach you this?"

"Yes." Klein did not hesitate to betray Old Neil.

Dunn picked up his dark red fountain pen and signed it.

"I happen to be applying for funding for the months of July, August, and September from the Church and the police department. I'll add yours in. When it's approved, get the money from Mrs. Orianna. You can draw the spirit pendulum in the afternoon."

"Alright," Klein answered simply and vigorously.

His tone and eyes were obviously filled with joy.

Before bidding Dunn farewell, he asked casually, "Shouldn't the budget for July, August, and September be applied for by June?"

Why are you applying for July's budget only in July?

Dunn fell silent for a few seconds before sipping his coffee.

"We encountered three cases in June. I was so busy that I forgot about it."

As expected of Captain and his poor memory... Klein knew he had asked a question he should not have asked. He gave a chuckle before leaving immediately.

With that, he began a simple but regular lifestyle. He would spend half an hour in the early morning Cogitating. He would have two hours of mysticism lessons in the morning and an hour and a half of studying the historical documents. After lunch, he would take a short nap in the break room to regain his energy.

Following that, he would draw bullets and head to the Shooting Club. After finishing his practice, he would stroll over to Welch's place, which was not too far. He would then change routes and return to Iron Cross Street. That way, he could save on the carriage fees. If he had time, he would practice his Spirit Vision and Spirit Dowsing. On the way, he would buy groceries.

...

In a private chemistry laboratory equipped with apparatus and items.

A tall, blond Audrey was looking at the cup in her hand. There were countless bubbles and it made the atmosphere serene.

Finally, the liquid in the cup precipitated into a sticky silver substance.

"Haha, I'm indeed talented in mysticism. I succeeded in one try! I was worried of failure and prepared two sets of materials!" the girl muttered to herself in delight.

She put away the items she took from her family's vault or exchanged them with others. She took a deep breath and prepared to close her eyes to drink down the Spectator potion.

At that moment, barking sounded from outside the laboratory. Audrey frowned instantly.

She hid the cup of silver liquid in a dark corner, turned around and headed to the door.

"Susie, who's here?" Audrey turned the doorknob and asked the golden retriever sitting in front of the door.

Susie wagged her tail in an obsequious manner. Her personal maidservant, Annie, had appeared in the corridor nearby.

Audrey walked out of the laboratory and closed the door. She looked at Annie and said, "Didn't I tell you? Do not disturb me when I'm running chemistry experiments."

A vexed Annie answered, "But there's an invitation from the Duchess, Duchess Della."

"Duke Negan's wife?" Audrey took a few steps forward and asked Annie.

“Yes. She has managed to hire the services of the palace’s baker,

Madam Vivi, and plans to invite you and Madam to afternoon tea,” Annie recounted the invitation.

Audrey tapped her cheeks discreetly and said, “Tell my mother that I have a headache. Perhaps I’m a little dehydrated because of the scorching sun. Please get her to convey my apologies to Madam Della.”

As she spoke, she acted frail.

“Miss, it’s not only afternoon tea, but a literature salon,” added Annie.

“But that won’t treat my dizziness. I need rest,” rejected Audrey firmly.

Simultaneously, she muttered deep down. *If they insist, I’ll faint for all of you to see. The etiquette teacher said that I can do it most perfectly... I think I heard something?*

“Alright,” Annie exhaled and said. “Do you need me to help you back to your room?”

“There’s no need. I’ll clean up the laboratory first.” Audrey was yearning to return immediately to consume the potion.

However, she suppressed her impatience. She only returned to the laboratory’s entrance when she saw Annie leave.

Suddenly, she discovered that the golden retriever, Susie, who was waiting outside, was gone. Furthermore, the door to the laboratory was half opened.

“I forgot that Susie can open doors with handles... What was that sound? Not good!” Audrey heard crisp sounds coming from within. Suddenly, she came to a realization as she charged into the laboratory.

All she could see was the cups shattered on the floor. Susie was licking the final drop of silver liquid.

Audrey stood rooted at the entrance like a statue.

Susie immediately sat down and looked at her owner innocently as she wagged her tail.

...

In the seas beyond the Pritz Harbor, there was an island perennially enveloped in storms. An ancient sailboat was docked at its harbor.

A blond man dressed in a robe with lightning patterns was looking at Alger Wilson opposite to him. He asked, perplexed, “Alger, you could have returned to the kingdom and become a captain of a Mandated Punisher team or a reputable bishop. Why did you choose to voyage out into sea and become the captain of the Blue Avenger?”

Alger wore a stoic expression on his rough face. He replied solemnly, “The sea belongs to the Storm. This is the Lord’s kingdom. I’m willing to abide by the Lord’s will and monitor this area of His kingdom.”

“Alright.” The blond haired man clenched his fist and struck his chest. “May the Storm be with you.”

“May the Storm be with you.” Alger replied with the same standard salute.

He stood on the deck with a few sailors and watched his companions leave the boat, walking into the distance.

“Sainz, you do not understand because you do not know enough...” Alger muttered silently.

Meanwhile, Audrey finished her second concoction in a panicstricken state.

Seeing that the silver potion looked nothing different from before, she was nearly moved to tears.

Gulp. She quickly drank down the Spectator potion.

...

Friday. A storm befell Tingen. The heavy rain pounded on the windows of every household.

Inside the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein, Rozanne, and Bredt sat on the sofa in the reception hall and enjoyed lunch.

As there was only a kettle for boiling water, there was no way to heat up leftovers. Klein could not eat rye bread every day or take the carriage home every day. If he did that, he would have to walk from Iron Cross Street to Welch's place in the afternoon and consider taking a carriage back. It was a waste of money; therefore, he began joining Rozanne and his colleagues in eating the so-called 'office rations.'

The nearby Old Will's Restaurant would punctually send a waiter at half past ten every day. He would ask for their orders and after determining the quantity, he would send it over at half past twelve. The food was contained in what resembled meal boxes. At three, he would return to take their orders for dinner and take back the utensils.

The 'rations' included meat, vegetables, and bread. Although the quantity was lacking, it was barely sufficient to fill a person. A cost of a meal ranged from seven to ten pence depending on the different premium levels.

Klein would always thicken his skin and order the meal costing seven pence. Typically, there was half a pound of wheat bread, a tiny piece of meat cooked in different ways, a ladle of thick soup with vegetables, and tiny bits of butter or margarine.

"We actually only have one Nighthawk here today..." Rozanne said as she delivered a spoonful of thick soup into her mouth.

"I heard that a case with cultist elements is going on in Golden Indus. Therefore, the police department has requested for two Nighthawks..." Bredt said as he put down his bread.

Klein used the remaining wheat bread and dabbed it into the last bits of meat juice before stuffing it into his mouth. He did not say a word.

Under his left sleeve, there was a silver chain with a topaz hanging.

At that moment, knocks sounded outside the half-closed main door.

"...Please come in." Rozanne was taken aback as she put down her spoon. She quickly used a handkerchief to wipe her mouth and stood up.

The door was pushed open as a man in a halved top hat came in. The left shoulder of his black formal suit was drenched.

The sides of his hair had grayed. He put away his umbrella and said to Klein and company, "Is this the former small mercenary squad?"

"You can say that," answered Rozanne like clockwork.

The lanky man coughed and said, "I have a mission request."

CHAPTER 42: BUTLER KLEE

A mission request... You probably came to the wrong place... This security company's signboard is really nothing but a signboard...

Klein immediately held back his urge to lampoon when he heard the visitor. How he yearned for there to be a message board and a screen for him to share his thoughts.

But he soon realized that he had once asked a similar question. The captain's answer was that they could take on jobs if they were free. The money earned could be used as funding for the team's petty cash account and bonuses for the participants.

Rozanne's eyes darted around as she thought for a moment before saying, "Our security personnel are all out on missions. The fastest it will take for them to return is an hour. If your matter isn't urgent, you can consider our services."

Among the six formal Nighthawk members, Captain Dunn Smith had been invited to the cathedral by the bishop for some unknown discussion. Leonard Mitchell was guarding Chanis Gate in his place.

Corpse Collector Frye and Sleepless Royale Reideen had already headed to the Golden Indus Borough to assist the police in the investigation of a robbery case with cultist inklings. Sleepless Kenley White was on leave, while Midnight Poet Seeka Tron had gone to Raphael Cemetery in the north suburb for a daily patrol.

As for the remaining two Beyonders, Old Neil was frail and too advanced in his years. He had not taken any missions in a long time. Klein was still a novice and was truly inadequate in various aspects.

"They are all out..." With one hand holding his umbrella, the lanky man's expression turned gloomy as he took off his hat. He bowed and said, "Sorry for intruding. Goodbye."

He turned around and walked out. He went down the stairs and left 36 Zouteland Street amid the spattering rain and howling winds.

"What a bloody pity." Rozanne watched the man left and sighed regretfully.

Although she would not have gotten any share of the commission, she definitely would have been able to partake in a sumptuous meal.

"There's nothing we can do about it. Chanis Gate needs someone watching it all the time." Klein put down his cutlery in satisfaction. Even though he did not like the soup mixture of turnips and vegetables, he still drank it clean. "Don't tell me you want Bredt to take the mission? Or yourself?" Rozanne rolled her eyes and giggled.

"Bredt won't do, but you can. Our Mister Seer..."

The moment she finished her sentence, she immediately realized what she had just said. She covered her mouth in shock because the door had not been fully closed. It someone walked past outside or heard anything about Beyonders, it would be considered a leak.

"Thankfully Captain isn't around..." Rozanne looked out the door and secretly stuck her tongue out. "Or I'll have to go for confession again!"

Bredt and Klein laughed out in unison as they exchanged looks before beginning to put away the cutlery.

After everything was done, Klein, who did not bring his umbrella, decided to stay at Blackthorn Security Company due to the ongoing rain.

He took out some newspapers and sat on the soft but bouncy sofa as he leisurely began his 'afternoon break.'

“The airship route from Backlund to Desi Bay is now in service...”

“The complete anthology of the Great Detective Manseng is publishing soon...”

“An advertisement for Lagolas Weapons? A standard model revolver carrying six bullets costs three pounds and ten soli, a double barrel gun costs two pounds...”

...

Klein flipped through the Tingen City Honest Paper when a particular piece of news suddenly caught his attention.

“...the suspect responsible for killing Mr. Welch and Miss Naya has been caught. We believe it is a much-needed reprieve from the horror that has gripped North Borough, Golden Indus Borough, and East Borough... Welch’s father, Mr. McGovern, who is a banker, has escorted his youngest son’s corpse back to Constant City where a grand burial will be held...”

After reading it a few times, Klein suddenly sighed.

From the looks of it, Welch’s father had bought the police’s explanations and did not hire a private investigator to investigate the matter...

His grief from losing his youngest son can’t be any greater than that of my parents who lost their only son...

In a sullen mood, Klein sat there motionless for a long time.

He neither found it odd that he was not invited to Welch’s and Naya’s burials, nor did he feel depressed.

Once everything calms down, I’ll find a chance to offer a bouquet of flowers to their graves... Klein was about to take a nap in the break room when a knock came from the door of the reception hall again.

“Please come in.” Rozanne, who was nodding off, suddenly jolted awake.

The half-closed door was pushed open again. The lanky man from before walked in once again.

“Can I wait here? Your mercenaries, no— security personnel should be back soon, right?” He asked sincerely, trying his best to hide his anxious expression.

“Sure. Please have a seat.” Rozanne pointed at the sofa nearby.

Klein asked out of curiosity, “Where did you hear about our security company? Who introduced you here?”

He had made two trips despite the heavy afternoon storm while still willing to wait?

Yes. The Nighthawks must have easily resolved missions that might seem very difficult to others. They must have accrued quite a reputation...

The man left his umbrella outside the door and as he walked to the sofa, he replied with a rueful smile, “I have traveled the nearby streets and paid a visit to all the mercenaries, uh— security companies and private investigators. You are my only hope. The others do not have the manpower to take additional missions... To be frank, if not for the waiter that delivers meals, I really did not imagine that there was another security company here.”

...It’s completely different from what I imagined... Klein was stunned.

Rozanne interjected with a question, “They are very busy? Are there that many missions?”

The man sat down and sighed.

“You are a mercenary team, no—a security company. I believe you must have heard of the armed burglary murder at Howes Street?”

Howes Street... Armed burglary murder... Alright, unfortunately, I'm one of the people involved... Klein nodded with a slightly heavy heart.

"Yes."

"Due to the presence of a ferocious and cruel criminal, the rich men living in the neighboring streets, and even across all of Tingen City, are terrified. Apart from increasing the numbers of their security detail, they have also hired many more security personnel and private detectives. This resulted in a shortage of supply in your line of work," the tall and skinny man explained clearly.

A standard chain-reaction... Klein and Rozanne exchanged looks and saw the self-deprecating smile from each other's faces.

The security industry had entered a golden age. Yet, Blackthorn Security Company was not affected in any way. It was apparent how dismally the company was run.

Of course, to a certain extent, it also proved the success of the Nighthawks in hiding themselves.

After waiting for another twenty plus minutes, Klein prepared to leave since the rain was coming to a stop. He planned on practicing at the Shooting Club.

At that moment, the black-haired and green-eyed Leonard Mitchell walked out of the partition. He looked curiously at the sofa.

"This is?"

"A client. Is Captain back?" Rozanne asked delightfully.

"Back?" The lanky man was taken aback when he heard that.

He had been sitting there, staring at the door. How did he not discover someone's return?

Rozanne's expression immediately froze as she chuckled. "As a security company, we don't only use

the front door." "Figures." The lanky man nodded in enlightenment.

He was also not surprised by the term 'Captain.' Security companies were mercenary teams or small-scale mercenary guilds. It was normal for 'Captain' to be used.

Leonard did not tuck in his white shirt. His black vest was also casually draped on. He took a glance at the lanky man when he suddenly snapped his fingers and said, "I'm a member of the security personnel at Blackthorn. How might I address you? How may I help you?"

Perhaps it was because he had long heard about the unrestrained characters of mercenaries that he did not feel the anger of being humiliated. Instead, he let out a breath of relief.

He watched Leonard sit down, and organized his words.

"My name is Klee, a butler of Mr. Vickroy, a tobacco merchant. His only son, little Elliott, was kidnapped this morning. We have already informed the police and the matter has been given high priority. However, Mr. Vickroy remains uneasy. He wishes to go through the channels which mercenaries, uh—security personnel have, as well as your understanding of Tingen, to investigate the case from a different angle and ensure that little Elliott is rescued safely."

"If you are able to find where the kidnappers are hiding, Mr. Vickroy will be willing to pay you 100 pounds. If you have the means to successfully save Young Master Elliott, he is willing to pay double. 200 pounds."

Leonard Mitchell smiled leisurely.

“Mr. Vickroy seems to only wish for us to find the kidnappers’ hideout? If not, he will not think that his only son is worth a hundred pounds. A tobacco merchant who has close ties with the southern plantations will not just offer two hundred pounds.”

“No, Mr. Vickroy is only an ordinary merchant. He’s not considered wealthy. Besides, he believes the police will be more professional when it comes to rescuing his son,” Klee answered frankly.

“Alright. No problem.” Leonard snapped his fingers again.

His green eyes turned their gaze on Rozanne.

“My beautiful lady, please write up a contract.”

“Don’t always act like a poet. In fact, all you do is recite the works of others.” Having forgotten the presence of the client, Rozanne quipped. She was used to exchanging snipes with Leonard.

Of course, the Blackthorn Security Company did not really care about its clients. It was great to have them, but it was also fine not having them.

Rozanne left the reception counter and entered the staff office. Soon, there were sounds of typing coming out from the office.

The corners of Klein’s mouth twitched a little. He found them too unprofessional.

There was no standard template for a contract!

This sure is tragic...

And more saddening is the fact that I’m working at such an unprofessional company...

The moment these thoughts arose in him, Rozanne completed a simple contract that had only a few clauses. Then, Klee and Leonard Mitchell signed it.

After Klee stamped it, she took the contract and returned to the accounting room and got Mrs. Orianna to stamp it with the Blackthorn Security Company logo—something that was actually useless. Dunn typically handed it to Orianna for safekeeping. On Sunday, it would be passed to Rozanne and company.

“I’ll wait for your good news.” After receiving one copy of the contract, Klee stood up and bowed with his hat off.

Leonard did not respond. He seemed to be in deep thought.

He suddenly turned his head toward Klein and revealed a smile.

“I need your help.”

“Ah?” Klein was taken aback.

“I mean you and I can finish this mission together.” The corners of Leonard’s mouth curved up slightly as he explained, “I’m good at combat, shooting, climbing, sensing, and chanting, and taking on some support roles. But that does not include looking for people. You don’t expect Old Neil to go out in such weather, right?”

When he said ‘sensing,’ his voice was lowered to a mumble that Klein could barely hear.

“Alright.” Klein did have the urge to attempt his new ‘abilities,’ while also feeling a little wary toward Leonard Mitchell.

Phew. Let’s hope it will be completed successfully... I wonder how useful my Seer abilities will be... He wondered with some anticipation.

While looking at Klein, Leonard smiled and nodded.

"Then, do you need anything from them?"

He had cooperated with Old Neil and company numerous times, so he naturally knew that divination required a medium, especially when the person being divined was not present.

Klein thought for a moment before saying to Klee, "I need some of Elliott's recent clothes which have not been washed or starched. It would be better if you have any accessories he used to wear on him."

He tried to choose ordinary mediums, not something that would normally invite questions.

But even so, Klee wore a look of puzzlement.

"Why?"

After his question, he added, "I have a picture of Young Master Elliott on me."

Why? Because we are divining his location... Klein was momentarily at a loss for an answer.

If he answered truthfully, ignoring the fact that it violated the confidentiality clause, Klee would likely storm out immediately and rip apart the contract while cursing, "This bunch of cheats! If that works, why don't I find the most famous Spirit Medium in Awwa County!"

By the side, Leonard Mitchell chuckled and said, "Mr. Klee, my partner, um—colleague rears a unique pet. Its sense of smell is sharper than a hound's. That's why we need clothes that little Elliott wore and items he used to wear on him to aid us in finding him. As you know, clues typically bring you to a general region."

"As for the picture, we would need it too. Both of us need to know what little Elliott looks like."

Klee accepted the reason by nodding slowly.

"Will you be waiting here, or will you be going with me to Mr. Vickroy's residence in the city?"

"Let's go together. It saves time," replied Klein simply.

Not only was he eager to try out his abilities as a Beyonder, but he also wanted to save the child.

"Alright, the carriage is downstairs." As Klee spoke, he took out a black-and-white photograph and handed it to Leonard.

It was a picture of Elliott Vickroy alone. He was about ten years old with rather long hair that nearly covered his eyes. There were obvious freckles on his face and he did not seem to stand out.

Leonard glanced at it and handed it to Klein.

Klein took a careful look and placed the photograph into his pocket. Then, he took his cane and put on his hat. He followed the two out of Blackthorn Security Company and boarded the carriage downstairs.

The carriage's interior was rather spacious. It was lined with thick carpet and a tiny table to rest items on.

As Klee was around, Klein and Leonard did not say a word. They quietly took in the experience of traversing the pooling roads in a carriage.

"The carriage driver is quite good." Leonard broke the silence after some time with praise and a smile.

"Yeah." Klein answered perfunctorily.

Klee forced a smile and said, "Your compliments are his honor. We will be there soon..."

As they were afraid of alerting the kidnappers, the carriage did not stop at the Vickroy's residence. Instead, it stopped at the side of a nearby street.

Klee held an umbrella and returned along. After waiting for some time, Leonard talked to Klein again.

“My surmise the last time was not without a goal. I was just trying to tell you that the notebook will definitely appear again.

Perhaps, it might be soon.”

“That really isn’t a happy surmise.” Klein used his chin to gesture towards the carriage driver outside, indicating that he did not wish to discuss sensitive topics with outsiders around.

Leonard whistled and turned his head to look out the window. He saw raindrops streak across the glass, leaving behind blurry marks. It made the world outside a complete blur.

After a while, Klee returned with a bag of items. Since he walked in a hurry, the edge of his trousers were soiled and his shirtfront was slightly wet.

“These are the clothes Young Master Elliott wore yesterday. This is the Storm Amulet he used to wear.”

Klein took it and glanced at it. He discovered it to be a miniature gentleman’s formal suit—a small shirt, vest, bow tie, etc.

And the Storm Amulet was made of bronze. It was carved with symbols representing gales and sea waves, but they did not trigger Klein’s perception.

“I’ll recount in detail the incidents leading up to Young Master Elliott’s kidnapping. Hopefully, it will let you find him easier...” Klee sat down and described the nightmare that happened in the morning, hoping that the helpers he went through great trouble to hire would be of help.

Klein and Leonard held no interest in the specifics. All they cared about was the number of kidnappers, if anything unusual had happened, or if they had any weapons.

“Three,” “normal,” “armed with firearms...” After obtaining the desired information, they bade Klee farewell and hired a twowheeled light carriage.

Unlike public carriages, private-hire carriages were either fourwheeled or two-wheeled. They were charged either by time or distance. The latter was at four pence a kilometer in the city and eight pence a kilometer outside. The former cost two soli per hour or part thereof. After the first hour, there were additional charges of six pence every fifteen minutes. In inclement weather or if the customer needed to go faster, the fare could even be higher.

Klein had heard from Azik that in the capital, Backlund, these carriage drivers were famous for quoting outrageous prices.

To him, taking a private carriage was quite a luxury. However, he did not need to worry about this at the moment since Leonard had tossed two one-soli notes to the carriage driver.

“Charge it by the time.” After Leonard gave his instructions, he closed the carriage’s door.

“Where are you going?” The carriage driver was delighted and puzzled as he held the two notes.

“Wait a moment.” Leonard cast his gaze at Klein.

Klein nodded slightly and took out Elliott’s clothes. He spread it out on the carriage’s floor and then wound the Storm Amulet around his cane’s handle.

He held the silver-inlaid black cane and hung it straight over Elliott’s clothes.

He gathered the sphere of light in his head as his mind rapidly turned still. His brown eyes quickly turned deeper in color as he entered a half-Cogitation state.

He felt his body’s “spirit” turning light. He vaguely saw the world of spirits everywhere. He silently said, “Elliott’s location.”

After repeating it seven times, he released his grip of the black cane, but the cane did not fall to the ground. It remained standing in front of him even though the carriage was shaking!

Minute but invisible stirrings happened around Klein and he felt as if pairs of eyes were looking at him.

Over the past few days, Klein had felt this sensation occasionally when he was in the state of Cogitation or Spiritual Vision.

With a little fear, he looked at the cane with his deep black eyes.

He recited once again in his heart, "Elliott's location."

"Elliott's location."

After he finished saying that, the cane fell and pointed straight ahead.

"Straight." Klein held the cane and said in a deep voice.

His voice sounded a little ethereal as though it could penetrate the unknown world.

This was one of the divination abilities he had grasped. It was called "Dowsing Rod Seeking." The tool of choice had to be wooden, metallic, or a mixture of both.

In ordinary circumstances, he would require two real dowsing rods. Dowsing rods were shaped like two straight metal wires tapered to an edge. He would hold on to the shorter side and turn it to ascertain the correct direction. But as a Seer, Klein realized that through practice, he could search for people directly using this method. He could also use his cane as a replacement for dowsing rods. The direction in which the cane fell was the direction of the item he was seeking.

As for the Antigonus family's notebook, Klein could not remember it at all. Without the slightest impression, there was no way for him to find it.

"Go straight." Leonard instructed the carriage driver loudly. "We will tell you when there's a need to turn."

The carriage driver did not understand why that was necessary, but the notes in his pocket and the willingness of his passengers to hand over the money kept him quiet. He chose to follow the strange instructions.

The carriage proceeded slowly, passing through one street after another.

Midway, Klein used Dowsing Rod Seeking to correct their direction.

After the carriage circled a building once, he finally determined that Elliott was inside. It had only been thirty minutes since they bade Klee farewell.

After sending off the cane, Klein did not continue using Elliott's clothes. Instead, he placed the cane, entwined with the Storm Amulet directly onto the ground.

His eyes turned dark once again as the raindrops around him suddenly spun in place.

The cane fell to the front with a slant. Klein pointed at the staircase and said, "There."

"At times, I really envy Old Neil. Similarly, I envy you now." Upon seeing this scene, Leonard smiled with a sigh.

Klein shot him a glance and replied with a calm tone, "This is nothing difficult. If you are willing to learn, you would definitely be able to master it... Your perceptivity should be very high, right?"

Leonard nodded and chuckled.

"That's not something good."

He quickened his pace and walked into the building amid the ending rain.

Klein was afraid of drenching his formal suit, so he jogged in tow.

The building only had three stories. It was similar to a unit block from Earth. The entrance to each floor was situated along the flight of stairs. There were only two units on per floor. Klein used Dowsing Rod Seeking on both the first and second floors, but the cane remained still while pointing upward.

The two of them quieted their footsteps and arrived at the third floor. Klein once again placed the black cane on the floor.

Whoosh!

A breeze blew across the stairs as his pupils changed colors. The darkness seemed like it could suck the souls of people.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Sobs seemed to sound out around them.

Klein relaxed his palm as the cane with the entwined Storm Amulet magically stood erect.

He silently read "Elliott's location" again. He watched his black cane drop silently as it pointed to the right room.

"They should be in there." While Klein picked up his cane, he tapped his glabella twice.

Various colors saturated as he looked at the right room. He saw all sorts of auras inside.

"One, two, three, four... Three kidnappers and one hostage. The numbers match... One of their auras is short. It's likely Elliott... Mr. Klee said that they have two hunting rifles and a revolver..." Klein whispered.

Leonard chuckled.

"Let me recite a poem for them."

"Why be a kidnapper? Why can't you happily be civilized person?"

He put down the bag with Elliott's clothes and took two steps forward. His expression suddenly turned serene and melancholic.

His magnetic and deep voice gradually sounded.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies..."

CHAPTER 44: FATE

Leonard's singing sounded like a lullaby as it lightly resounded through the doors and into the winding wooden stairwell.

Klein's mind immediately turned torpid. He felt like he saw a silent moonlight and serene rippling lake.

His eyelids rapidly turned heavy as if he were about to fall asleep standing.

Amid these indistinct sensations, he also felt a strange, formless, and indifferent focus on his back. It felt like he was wandering the spirit world himself.

A baffling sense of déjà vu suffused as Klein suddenly found his train of thought once again. With his strong spiritual perception and extreme familiarity with Cogitation, he barely escaped the influence of the Midnight Poem.

However, he remained serene and could hardly evoke any emotions.

Soon, Leonard stopped singing as he turned his head with a smile.

"I'm considering asking Captain's permission to apply for a Feynapotter lute. How can there not be an accompaniment when singing?

"Heh heh, I'm just kidding. I can hear them asleep."

The black-haired, green-eyed Nighthawk with his poetic vibe took a stride forward and walked to the door that separated them from the kidnappers and hostage.

He suddenly moved his shoulder and threw a punch at the door's lock.

Crack!

The wooden board around the lock shattered in a muffled manner.

"This requires precise control." Leonard turned his head and smiled. He then reached his hand into the hole and opened the door.

Klein, who had regained consciousness, was not as confident as him. He reached under his armpit, drew his revolver, and turned the cylinder, making sure that he could shoot at a moment's notice.

As the door swung back, he saw a man sleeping on a table with a gun by his feet. Another man was rubbing his eyes in a daze while trying to stand up.

Bam!

Leonard slid forward and struck the awakening kidnapper unconscious.

Klein planned to enter as well when he suddenly sensed something. He turned around abruptly and faced the stairwell.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Footsteps were approaching from below. It became clear that "something" was a hatless man in a brown coat circling the stairwell in his progression toward the third floor while hugging a paper bag of bread.

Suddenly, he stopped. He saw a gun's barrel aiming at him with a metallic luster.

His pupils reflected a young man dressed in a halved top hat, black formal suit with a bow tie of the same color. It also reflected the cane which rested along the rail and the dangerous revolver.

"Do not move. Raise your hands. Three, two, one..." Klein's tone was deep but relaxed.

He held the revolver with both hands as he tried to imagine the man as a target from his practice.

Amid the tense atmosphere, the man in the brown coat threw the bag of bread and slowly raised his hands.

“Sir, is this a kind of a joke? Has there been a misunderstanding?” He stared intently at the finger that Klein had placed on the trigger as he forced a smile.

Klein was temporarily unable to determine if he was an accomplice or a neighbor, but he did not reveal any abnormalities. He said in a deep voice, “Do not attempt to resist. Someone will determine if it’s a misunderstanding in a while.”

At that moment, Leonard, who had finished handling the kidnappers, walked out and noticed the man in the stairwell. He said leisurely, “So the kidnappers have another accomplice responsible for buying and delivering food?”

Upon hearing this, the man’s pupils constricted as he suddenly raised his foot and kicked the bag of bread up in an attempt to block Klein’s vision.

Seemingly unaffected, Klein coldly pulled the trigger like his usual training.

Bang!

Blood burst out from the man’s left shoulder.

He tumbled to the ground and attempted to escape from the second floor; however, Leonard had already reached his hand towards the handrail before leveraging himself to jump over.

With a dull thud, Leonard landed on the man from above.

The man fainted as Leonard swatted away some of the blood that had splattered on him. He looked up at Klein and chuckled.

“Nice shooting.”

I was trying to hit his legs... The corner of Klein’s mouth twitched in an indiscernible manner as he caught a whiff of the smell of blood.

He discovered that despite not having any enhancements to his visual, auditory, or tactile senses after consuming the Seer potion, he could still “see” obstructed objects and “hear” faint footsteps, allowing him to take preemptive judgment.

Was this in the scope of spiritual perception? Klein nodded in thought as he watched Leonard find a sharp dagger in the accomplice’s possession and “drag” him into the room.

With a gun and cane in each hand, Klein entered the kidnapper’s room. They saw Elliott Vickroy jolt awake from the gunshot as he straightened his body and sat up slowly from a huddled position.

Leonard had securely tied up the three kidnappers with the rope they used against Elliott. Bunched together, they were thrown in a corner. The lack of rope was made up by tearing their clothes.

The unconscious man who had been shot in the shoulder was bandaged, but Leonard disdained getting his hands dirty, so he did not help him extract the bullet.

“W-who are you people?” Elliott stammered in pleasant delight when he saw the scene before him.

“Yes, you guessed right. Very precise.” The genuflecting Leonard answered casually.

I never expected this bastard to have some humor cells in him... Klein lowered his revolver and said to Elliott, “We are mercenaries hired by your father. You can also call us security personnel.”

“Phew, for real? Have I been saved?” Elliott said joyfully without daring to make any movements.

It was apparent that he had suffered quite harshly in the short few hours of being a kidnapping victim. He did not have the kind of rashness someone his age normally would have.

Leonard stood up and said to Klein, “Go downstairs and find some patrolling cops. Get them to inform the tobacco merchant. I do not wish to walk out with a child and four idiots like a kidnapper.”

Klein, who was wondering about the aftermath, nodded. He put away his revolver, picked up his cane, and walked to the staircase.

As he went down the stairs, he had a nagging feeling that he had forgotten something. In addition, he heard Leonard say to Elliott, "Don't be nervous. You will soon see your father, mother, and your old butler, Klee. Why don't we play a round of Quint?"

...

Klein held back his laughter and walked out into the streets. With the help of pedestrians, he found two patrolling policemen.

He did not use his badge and identification as a member of the Special Operations Department; instead, he used his identity as a professional security company and recounted the happenings factually.

As for him holding a gun, he was not worried at all. He had received an all-purpose weapon permit the day before yesterday. His application was accelerated by going through internal channels.

The two policemen exchanged looks and one of them left to gather reinforcements and inform the Vickroy family. The other policeman followed Klein to the kidnappers' room.

After waiting for more than forty minutes, Leonard signaled to Klein while the policeman was not paying attention. Klein was to sneak out of the room with him.

"Trust me, heading to the police station is an extreme waste of time. Let's leave first," the Nighthawk with the poetic bearing explained with a relaxed look.

Since Leonard was making it clear that he would take any responsibility for any repercussions, he did not retort and followed in tow.

Almost five minutes later, a few carriages rushed to the building where the kidnappers were. The old butler, Klee, disembarked with his portly master, Vickroy.

Up to this moment in time, he was still in a daze. He found it incredulous that news would come so fast. It felt like a dream.

Suddenly, he heard a crisp snap as he turned around.

A two-wheeled carriage drove past with its windows open. The black-haired and green-eyed Leonard had snapped his fingers again.

After passing by Vickroy's carriage, Leonard closed the window, turned around, and looked at Klein.

He extended his right hand and smiled.

"It was a pleasure working with you!"

I don't think we are on that good terms... Klein politely shook his head.

He did not expect the kidnapping case to be resolved so quickly. All he could do was marvel at the capabilities of Beyonders. Even though he was just a half-assed Sequence 9 Beyonder, he was able to do many inconceivable things.

"This is a celebratory gesture of peace among aristocrats after a clash of swords," explained Leonard with a smile.

"I know." Klein had many aristocratic classmates.

He looked outside the window and said with a frown, "Shouldn't we confirm with Mr. Klee? If he believes that the police rescued Elliott, our commission will be halved." A total of 100 pounds!

There was no doubt about their providing of the kidnappers' location from their 'meeting' from before.

"Don't mind it. To us, money isn't that important," said Leonard with a shrug.

...It's very important to me!

Klein forced a polite smile and said, "Many poets died early from poverty."

Leonard chuckled.

"I believe Elliott would not lie on this matter. I can tell that he still has some of his innocence left in him. However, you will not get much of the 200 pound commission either."

"How much would I get?" asked Klein immediately.

"As the unspoken rule has always been, half of the commission would be handed to Mrs. Orianna as additional funding for the team. The remaining would be split among members. A pity you aren't a formal member; you will only get about ten percent of the remaining half."

10 pounds? That isn't bad either... Klein pretended to feel the pinch as he asked, "Aren't you worried that the kidnappers will realize that they were under the influence of a Beyonder's powers after they wake up?"

"They will not suspect anything. They will only believe that the weather was good and very conducive for sleeping, leading to them dozing off. They will even believe that the song existed only in their dreams. This is something we have verified before," answered Leonard very confidently. "Instead, it's your demon hunting bullets that might arouse suspicion. Of course, you being a queer who enjoys mysticism would be a perfectly reasonable explanation."

"I see." Klein was relieved. He just kept feeling like he had forgotten or overlooked something.

...

After returning to Zouteland Street, Klein did not wait for Klee's arrival. He strolled to Welch's place and took a different route home. On the way, he bought some beef and olives for dinner.

The meal was enjoyable as always, with the same three siblings chatting idly. However, there was an additional visitor.

He was a worker responsible for collecting one penny for the gas meter.

The evening grew dark as the siblings bade each other good night and returned to their rooms.

Klein was sleeping soundly when he was suddenly awoken by something familiar outside. He opened the door in puzzlement and arrived outside the bedroom that no one stayed in.

He pushed open the mottled door and saw a gray desk.

There was a notebook on the table and its cover was made of hard paper. It was completely black in color.

A baffling sense of déjà vu arose in him as he walked over and opened the notebook.

The page he flipped open to was of a picture—a picture of someone dressed in gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress— The Fool!

Beneath The Fool was a line in Hermes.

"Everyone will die, including me."

Horror gripped Klein's heart as he suddenly realized that the corner of The Fool's mouth was curving up!

Fffffff!

He sat up in shock as he saw crimson moonlight penetrate his curtains. He saw his bookshelf and desk and the silhouette of his own bedroom. He realized that he had had a nightmare.

As a Seer, he knew what dreams typically portend. Therefore, he began to seriously search through his recollections.

Klein froze up when he did because he knew what he had missed out on today!

While he was immersed in Leonard's singing, he had sensed a formless and indifferent focus on his back.

The feeling of being observed felt different from the usual Cogitation or experience he had from using Spirit Vision. It gave him a sense of déjà vu!

According to Captain Dunn, once a feeling of déjà vu arose in him, it probably means...

Klein suddenly sat straight and confirmed the feeling.

Yes, it's that notebook! That Antigonus family's notebook!

The Antigonus notebook is in the apartment across the kidnappers'!

Although it was very coincidental, Klein believed that his intuition was correct.

He immediately got out of bed and rapidly changed out of the old clothes he usually wore to bed. He picked up a white shirt beside him and draped it on, quickly buttoning from top to bottom.

One, two, three... He suddenly realized that he was "missing" buttons. The left and right sides did not seem to match.

On careful look, Klein realized that he had made a mistake buttoning the first button, causing the shirt to warp.

He shook his head helplessly before taking a deep breath and slowly breathing out, using some of his Cogitation techniques to restore his calm.

After putting on his white shirt and black trousers, he barely managed to wear his underarm holster steadily. He pulled out the revolver he hid under his soft pillow and holstered it.

Without time to tie a bow tie, he draped his formal suit on and with a hat and cane in each hand, he walked to the door. After putting on his halved top hat, Klein gently twisted the door handle and walked into the corridor.

He carefully closed his bedroom's wooden door and sneaked downstairs like a thief. He used a fountain pen and paper in the living room to leave a note, informing his siblings that he had forgotten to mention that he had to be early for work today.

The moment he was out the door, Klein felt a cool breeze and his entire being calmed down.

The street in front of him was dark and silent without any pedestrians. Only the gas lamps illuminated the streets.

Klein took out his pocket watch from his pocket and snapped it open. It was just six in the morning and the crimson moonlight had not completely faded away. However, there was a hue of sunrise over the horizon.

He was just about to seek out an expensive for-hire carriage when he saw a two-horse, four-wheeled trackless carriage approaching him.

"There are public carriages this early in the morning?" Klein was puzzled as he went forward and waved for it to stop.

"Good morning, Sir." The carriage driver stopped the horses skillfully.

The ticketing officer beside him had his hand to his mouth while yawning.

"To Zouteland Street." Klein scooped out two pennies from his pocket and four halfpence.

"Four pence," the ticketing officer replied without any hesitation.

After paying for the ride, Klein got onto the carriage and found it empty. It exuded a clear loneliness amid the dark night.

"You are the first one," said the carriage driver with a smile.

The two brown horses widened their pace as they proceeded briskly.

"To be honest, I never imagined there to be a public carriage so early in the morning." Klein sat near the carriage driver and made idle chatter to divert his attention and relax his tense mind.

The carriage driver said in a self-deprecating manner, "From six in the morning to nine at night, but all I earn is one pound a week."

“Are there no breaks?” inquired Klein in bafflement.

“We take shifts to rest once a week.” The carriage driver’s tone turned heavy.

The ticketing officer beside him added, “We are in charge of plying the streets from six to eleven in the morning. Following that, we have lunch and an afternoon break. Near dinnertime, which is six in the evening, we replace our colleagues... Even if we do not need rest, the two horses will need it.”

“It wasn’t anything like that in the past. There was an accident that should not have happened. Due to fatigue, a carriage driver lost control of his carriage and it toppled. It resulted in us having shifts... Those bloodsuckers would never become this kind so suddenly otherwise!” The carriage driver scoffed.

Under the illumination of dawn, the carriage drove towards Zouteland Street and picked up seven to eight passengers on the way.

After Klein was less tense, he did not converse further. He closed his eyes and recalled the experiences from yesterday, hoping to notice if he had forgotten anything.

By the time the skies were bright when the sun was fully up, the carriage finally arrived at Zouteland Street.

Klein pressed his hat with his left hand and briskly jumped off the carriage.

He quickly stepped into 36 Zouteland Street and arrived outside Blackthorn Security Company after going up the flight of stairs.

The door was still closed and had yet to open.

Klein took out the ring of keys by his waist and found the corresponding brass key and inserted it into the keyhole and twisted it.

He pushed forward as the door slowly opened. He saw the blackhaired, green-eyed Leonard Mitchell sniffing at a recently popular cigarette.

“To be honest, I prefer cigars... You seem to be in a rush?” the poet-like Nighthawk asked in a relaxed and cozy manner.

“Where’s Captain?” Klein asked instead of answering.

Leonard pointed at the partition.

“He’s in the office. As an advanced Sleepless, he only needs two hours of sleep in the day. I believe it’s a potion those factory owners or bankers would like the most.”

Klein nodded and quickly passed through the partition. He saw that Dunn Smith had opened the door to his office and he was standing at its entrance.

“What’s the matter?” Dressed in his black trench coat, he held a gold-inlaid cane with a solemn and stern expression.

“The feeling of déjà vu came to me. It should be the notebook. The Antigonus family’s notebook.” Klein tried hard to make his answer clear and logical.

“Where was that?” Dunn Smith’s expression did not have any obvious changes.

However, Klein’s intuition told him that a clear and invisible stir had happened in him. This was possibly a flash of his spirit or a change in his emotions.

“It’s at the place Leonard and I saved the hostage yesterday. Opposite the kidnappers’ room. I didn’t notice it back then until I had a dream and received a revelation,” Klein did not conceal anything.

“From the looks of it, I missed out on making huge contributions.” Leonard, who had walked to the partition, chuckled.

Dunn nodded slightly as he instructed with a solemn expression, “Get Kenley to replace Old Neil’s watch of the armory. Let Old Neil and Frye come with us.”

Leonard stopped acting frivolous as he immediately informed Kenley and Frye who were in the Nighthawks’ recreation room. One of them was a Sleepless and the other was a Corpse

Collector.

Five minutes later, the two-wheeled carriage that came under the jurisdiction of the Nighthawks began driving down the sparse streets in the morning.

Leonard wore a feather hat, a shirt and a vest. He stood in as the carriage driver, lashing out a whip from time to time, sending out a crisp crack.

Inside the carriage, Klein and Old Neil sat on one side. Facing them were Dunn Smith and Frye.

The Corpse Collector’s skin was so white it looked like it either had not been under the sun in a very long while or he had a severe blood deficiency. He looked to be in his thirties with black hair and blue eyes. He had a high nose bridge and his lips were very thin. He had a cold and dark demeanor and had a faint smell from often touching corpses.

“Repeat the situation again in detail.” Dunn adjusted the collar of his black trench coat.

Klein stroked the hanging topaz in his sleeve as he began from their mission commissioning until the dream. By the side, Old Neil chuckled.

“Your fate seems to be entwined with that Antigonus family’s notebook. I never expected you to meet it in such a manner.”

That’s right. Isn’t this too much of a coincidence!? Thankfully, Leonard just mentioned that there was no indication of hidden factions of mysterious powers at play from the preliminary investigations of Elliott’s kidnapping. It was solely a crime motivated by money. Otherwise, I would really suspect if someone had deliberately arranged for this to happen... Klein found the situation rather curious.

It was too coincidental!

Dunn did not express his ideas as he was in deep thought. Likewise, Corpse Collector Frye maintained his silence in his black trench coat.

Only when the carriage stopped at the building mentioned by Klein was the silence broken.

“Let’s go up. Klein, you and Old Neil walk behind. Be careful, very careful.” Dunn got off the carriage and pulled out a strange revolver with a clearly long and thick barrel. He stuffed it into his right pocket.

“Alright.” Klein did not dare take point.

After Leonard found someone to watch the carriage, the five Beyonders walked orderly into the building. With very light footsteps, they arrived at the third floor.

“Is this the place?” Leonard pointed at the apartment opposite the kidnappers.

Klein tapped his glabella twice and activated his Spirit Vision.

In this state, his spiritual perception was enhanced again. He found the door familiar as if he had once entered it before.

“Yes.” He nodded in affirmation.

Old Neil also activated his spiritual perception and after observing carefully, he said, “There’s no one inside, nor are there any spiritual glows of magic.”

Corpse Collector Frye added with his hoarse voice, “There aren’t any evil spirits.”

He could see many spiritual bodies, including evil spirits and restless wraiths, even without activating his Spirit Vision.

Leonard took a step forward and, like yesterday, punched the door's lock.

This time not only did the surrounding wood shatter, even the door lock flew and fell noisily to the ground.

Klein seemed to feel an invisible seal instantly vanish. Immediately following that, he caught a whiff of an intense stench.

"Corpse, a rotting corpse," Frye described coldly.

He did not appear to suffer from nausea.

Dunn reached out his black-gloved right hand and pushed open the door slowly. The first thing that they saw was a chimney. For early July, there was an abnormal heat emanating the room.

In front of the chimney was a rocking chair. Sitting on it was an old woman dressed in black and white. Her head hung low.

Her body was abnormally large. Her skin was blackish-green and swollen. It felt like she would explode from a simple prod, spewing a foul rotting stench from within. As maggots and other parasites squirmed between her flesh, blood, and rotting juices, or clothes and wrinkles, they appeared like points of light in Spirit Vision. They seemed to cling close to an extinguished darkness.

Pa! Pa!

The old woman's eyeballs dropped to the floor and rolled a few times, leaving behind a yellowish-brown streak.

Klein felt disgusted and being unable to tolerate the putrid stench any longer, he bent over and puked.

Eugh! Eugh!

Klein squatted there, vomiting involuntarily. He was soon done with his puking since he did not eat breakfast.

At that moment, a tin-colored square flask that looked like a cigar box appeared in front of him.

The mouth which had lost its stopper emitted a mixture of smells akin to tobacco, disinfectant, and mint leaves. It cleared up Klein's nose and rejuvenated him.

The pungent smell continued to linger, but Klein no longer felt nauseous. He soon stopped vomiting.

He traced the tiny flask up and saw a pale hand that did not seem to belong to a member of the living. He saw the mouth of a black trench coat's sleeve and saw Corpse Collector Frye with his cold and dark bearing.

"Thank you." Klein recovered completely and with his hands on his knees, he stood back up.

Frye nodded without any expression.

"It'll be fine once you are used to it."

He put back the flask's stopper and put it into his pocket and turned around, walking to the highly decomposed corpse. Without gloves, he began examining the old woman. As for Dunn Smith and Leonard Mitchell, they paced slowly around the room, occasionally touching the table's surface or newspapers.

Old Neil pinched his nose and stood outside the door, grumbling in a muffled voice, "Seriously gross. I'm going to request for additional pay this month!"

Dunn turned his head over and touched the wall beside the chimney with his gloved right hand. While doing so, he asked Klein, "Does this place look familiar?"

Klein held his breath and constructed the silver pocket watch in his mind to calm down.

With him already in his Spirit Vision state, he immediately felt different. A scene that came from the deepest recesses of his memories flashed past his eyes.

Chimney, rocking chair, table, newspapers, the rusty nails on the door, the tin cans inlaid with silver...

The scenes were dark and dull, like a documentary from Earth. However, it was even more blurry and illusory.

The scene quickly stacked against what Klein was seeing. The feelings of déjà vu and having been here before presented themselves clearly. An illusory and ethereal scream seemed to pass through invisible walls:

"Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea..." "It feels a little familiar." Klein answered honestly while his brain felt a stabbing pain. Thankfully, he quickly tapped his glabella twice.

Hornacis... The Hornacis mountain range that appeared in original Klein's diary?

That is content that was deciphered from the Antigonus family's notebook...

The murmurs were very similar to one of the previous ones. It involved the word 'Hornacis' Is this a form of enticement?

Klein was gripped by shock as he did not dare think deeper, afraid that he would place himself on the trajectory of losing control.

Dunn nodded slightly and walked to a cupboard. He suddenly reached out his hand and pulled open its wooden door.

The bread inside was moldy and there were about seven gray, stiff dead rats.

“Leonard, go downstairs to get patrolling cops and explain the situation here,” instructed Dunn.

“Alright.” Leonard turned and left the apartment.

Following that, Dunn opened the door to two other bedrooms and did a careful search.

After being certain that there were no clues as well as any sign of the Antigonus family’s notebook, Frye also stood up. He wiped his hands with a white handkerchief he brought along with him and said, “The time of death was more than five days ago. There are no external injuries nor are there any clear signs that it was a result of Beyonder powers. The exact cause of death will require a postmortem.”

“Did you discover anything?” Dunn turned to look at Old Neil and Klein.

The two who were no longer in Spirit Vision state shook their heads in unison.

“Apart from the corpse, everything else is normal. Actually, no, there was an invisible energy sealing the apartment in the beginning. As you know, there will usually be similar processes when we use ritualistic magic,” Old Neil thought for a few seconds before adding.

Dunn was just about to say something when he looked outside the door. A few seconds later, Klein and Old Neil sensed something and turned to look at the stairwell.

A few seconds later, faint footsteps grew louder as Leonard walked up with a policeman.

The policeman’s expression changed once he caught the noxious smell. He immediately cooperated with his “colleague” from the Special Operations Department and began knocking on the doors of the residents on the second floor to gain an understanding of the situation on the third floor.

Moments later, the corporal with his two silver chevrons looked at the corpse on the rocking chair.

“Katy Stefania Bieber. Between 55 and 60 years old. Widow. Has rented this apartment with her son, Ray Bieber for more than ten years.”

“Her husband was formerly a gem artisan. Her son is about thirty years old and is single. He inherited his father’s trade and earns about one pound and fifteen soli a week. According to their neighbors, they have not seen them in more than a week.”

Before the policeman continued, Klein already knew the critical point that followed.

Missing. To be more precise, it was unknown where Ray Bieber had gone to!

The ancient notebook could very well be on him!

“Do you have a picture of Ray Bieber?” Dunn looked at the police officer. He was acting as the role of a high-ranking inspector.

However, it was not really acting since he was indeed a highranking inspector on the police department’s roster. His salary and various allowances were also paid according to his rank. Of course, it did not include his salary from the Church.

The police officer shook his head nervously and said, “I’m not sure... I’ll have to return to the station to search for it. It’s not typical for us to have pictures of every single person.”

“Got it. Continue questioning the residents on the first floor. Ask them in detail.” Dunn gave the order.

As he watched the police officer leave, he closed the door and turned to Old Neil.

“I’ll leave the rest to you. If not, we will have to make all the residents sleep and obtain Ray Bieber’s looks. Yea, I don’t really trust sketches based on verbal descriptions.”

Old Neil nodded. He took out a few thumb-sized bottles from a pocket in his black classic robe and scattered the liquids in a particular order.

Immediately following that, he pulled out a clump of powder and scattered it in a circle around him.

Strangely, a biting smell spread and was not influenced by the nauseating smells in the room. Klein also suddenly noticed that there was an invisible forcefield around him. It separated him from the environment and everyone else. It was like the room in its previous state.

Old Neil half-closed his eyes as his lips mumbled a soft and indiscernible incantation. Without being prepared, Klein vaguely heard the words, "Goddess, give me strength," "We look forward to the protection of the Night..."

Hum! A sudden wind tore through the windows and blew up the powder.

Klein's heart quaked suddenly as he felt goosebumps all over him. He found it difficult to describe. A terrifying "smell" that made him afraid of looking directly spread rapidly.

He was confused as he tensed up, unable to relax. It felt as though he had plunged into a state similar to what one would have after working on a highly advanced mathematical problem. Suddenly, Old Neil's eyes opened, his eyes pitch-black.

He took out a fountain pen from his pocket and began drawing on a piece of scrap paper on the table. He was so fast that his entire body was trembling.

Klein focused his gaze and saw a face with recessed eyes and a tall nose bridge rapidly appear.

When the natural curly short hair was done, Old Neil wrote a single line beneath the portrait.

"Black hair, deep blue eyes. Left of his mouth is a fully ceramic tooth implant."

Pada! The fountain pen in Old Neil's hand fell onto the paper as his body convulsed a few times.

"This is the image of Ray Bieber according to what's left in the room." Old Neil whispered as the color of his eyes restored rapidly.

Then, he turned back to his original spot and slowly circled it. The invisible forcefield that isolated things immediately dissipated in the form of a breeze.

"Praise the Lady." Old Neil tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon.

Klein's taut nerves relaxed as he made more acute observations. He discovered that there was nothing special about Ray Bieber's facial features. He had a relatively mild bearing. The only thing was that his philtrum sagged clearly.

"I'll try using Dowsing Rod Seeking." He picked up the portrait and found male clothes in the bedroom and spread them onto the ground.

Dunn, Leonard, and Old Neil did not stop him as they watched him place the black cane above the clothes and portrait. Frye was as silent as always.

Klein's eyes turned from brown to black as he finished his recitation, only to release his grip.

The black cane stood silently like it was embedded in the ground. "Ray Bieber's location." Klein silently repeated to himself again.

With the sound of humming wind, the cane fell down but kept changing directions while falling. Finally, it began spinning in slight circles.

Without any external help, the black cane stood stably again.

Klein repeated a few times with the same outcome. All he could do was shake his head at Dunn and Old Neil.

A strange power was interfering with his "divination..."

Dunn took off his black glove and said to Leonard and Klein, "Take Ray Bieber's portrait and inquire the residents for a final confirmation. Following that, we will issue a warrant of arrest against him for the murder of his mother."

"Alright." Klein held his cane and bent down to pick the portrait.

After the neighbors confirmed that the portrait was indeed Ray Bieber, Dunn instructed Leonard and the police officer to finish the procedures at the station. He and Frye headed to a few bars in Tingen City to seek help via other means.

Klein and Old Neil returned to Blackthorn Security Company on a public carriage. It was not even eight by the time they arrived; Rozanne had not even clocked in.

After closing the door, Klein cocked his head at Old Neil and, hoping to learn and answer his questions, asked him, "Why would I send the Antigonus family's notebook to Ray Bieber's home?"

This was completely in a different direction from Iron Cross Street where Welch stayed.

Old Neil walked to the sofa and chuckled.

"Isn't that obvious? Who knows what powers inside the notebook you invoked; maybe you did some described ritual out of curiosity and ended up provoking a strange existence that you should not have. The motive of this existence was to have the notebook sent to Ray Bieber and sever all clues, to prevent anyone from discovering it."

"Therefore, apart from you who were selected, Welch and Naya committed suicide; regarding you... To be frank, I still have no idea how you survived."

"I would like to know too..." Klein sat down as well as he deliberately replied with a wry smile. "I've also thought of the guesses you have of the proceedings. However, there's one thing I don't understand. Why did I have to hand the notebook to Ray Bieber?"

Old Neil shrugged and said, "Perhaps his Life Path Number [1] matches the requirements, or maybe he's one of the last remaining descendants of the Antigonus family. In short, there are too many possibilities... And why the notebook was sold to Tingen City would have similar reasons."

"I believe it's the descendant reason." Klein suddenly felt enlightened before he sighed.

"Unfortunately, I did not discover immediately, and Ray Bieber and that notebook have vanished."

Old Neil laughed.

"This is something that Dunn has to worry about. As for you, it's something good."

"Why do you say so?" Klein frowned in puzzlement.

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1. A Life Path Number was proposed by Pythagoras which is established from the date of birth and describes the nature of one's journey through life.

Old Neil rubbed his temples and said, "I believe we have a general idea of why the three of you engaged in a mass suicide. That notebook is also now purportedly in Ray Bieber's hands. Furthermore, the matter has already been exposed. Regardless of whether you are alive or dead, it will hardly influence any subsequent developments. I think—I believe that the surreptitious existence or mysterious power that caused all of this will not pay you any special attention. It's just like how you would not pay attention to the ants on the ground. Heh heh, as long as you do not try to make Him recall you.

"And our arrest warrant for Ray Bieber will quickly reach the Secret Order. They will also be able to guess that it is related to the Antigonus family's notebook. Believe me, for a secret organization that has been in existence for more than a thousand years, it has many channels of information. Therefore, their focus will be diverted to Ray Bieber's whereabouts, in a bid to find the notebook before us. They will not, nor is it possible for them to harass, stalk, or deal with you.

"Lad, congratulations on stepping out from the shadows of the past. What follows will be a brand-new journey filled with sunlight."

Klein nodded when he heard that as he said in a happy and relieved manner, "I hope so."

Having transmigrated here, he had been enveloped in uncertainty. Now, it felt like it had finally dissipated...

However, Klein was still feeling uncertain because the notebook seemed to be tied to him in a certain manner. It went to the point of him bumping into remnant clues coincidentally from a normal mission of rescuing a hostage.

He was afraid that there would come a day when a delivery man would send him a parcel, only to realize that it was that Antigonus family notebook after opening it up!

Let's hope everything will go as Old Neil described... He silently prayed.

When Old Neil heard his reply, he immediately scoffed.

"You don't seem to be a devout believer of the Goddess. At this moment, shouldn't you be drawing the sign of the crimson moon at your chest and say—may Goddess bless us?"

"Mr. Neil, you don't seem like one either. A real devotee would not say 'what follows will be a brand-new journey filled with sunlight.'" Having been studying mysticism under Old Neil, Klein had established a decent friendship with him, so he did not stand on ceremony to return a sarcastic remark.

Both of them locked eyes and chuckled with great rapport. At the same time, they tapped their chests four times.

"Praise the Lady!"

At that moment, they heard the grinding sounds of machinery as the main door to Blackthorn Security Company opened.

The elegant Mrs. Orianna with her fashionably coiled hair stepped into the reception hall with a light-green dress.

"Good morning, Mr. Neil. Good morning, Klein." She held a small leather handbag as she greeted with a smile. "It's another fabulous day today. A pretty good day."

"Good morning, Orianna. You are still as beautiful as ten years ago," replied Old Neil with a chuckle.

Orianna's eyes turned to slits as she upturned her face.

"Mr. Neil, the way you praise is still as infuriating as ten years ago."

She enunciated the words 'ten years.'

“Is that so?” Old Neil looked at Klein, confused. He wore a perplexed look.

Never mention anything that will remind the ladies of their age... As a keyboard warrior that knew a little of everything, Klein instantly understood what had peeved Mrs. Orianna. He smiled lightly and said,

“Good morning, Mrs. Orianna. You are as beautiful as always.”

“Thank you, our outstanding Khoy University graduate.” Orianna smiled with a nod before saying, “That old butler has already paid the mission’s commission. According to Captain’s rules, half of it will be used as additional funds, while the other half will be split between you and Leonard. But since you aren’t a formal member, you can only take ten percent of the half. Come over later to sign for it.”

“How much did he pay?” Klein asked happily while also feeling the pinch.

“200 pounds. This was what he said back then—’Lord, the esteemed Storm! I never imagined or believed that this was resolved just like that! This is even harder than us having a dream! Why is your security company so unknown? It’s an insult to the entire industry!’” Mrs. Orianna mimicked the old butler’s southern accent.

Klein thought seriously for a few seconds before saying humorously, “This is just too unfair for those kidnappers.”

Two Beyonders had resolved the problem quickly using methods that could be described as easy and pleasant... This is like an adult bullying a few kids while in full combat attire...

“They were just too unlucky. They must have lost the protection of the divine,” said Orianna with a soft laugh. “I told the butler that we were only lucky. One of our informants happened to see the kidnappers bring the child into the hideout. Therefore, do not have too much hopes for us. We really are just a very ordinary security company.”

Typically speaking, the more you emphasize something is ordinary, the more extraordinary it is... Klein lampooned with a smile. He watched Mrs. Orianna walk through the partition and enter the accounting room.

Old Neil puckered his lips by the side and said enviously, “You really are a lucky lad. You haven’t joined us for long and you’ve encountered a job worth 200 pounds.”

“Is that very rare?” Klein asked in puzzlement.

Prior to this, he was either studying history or mysticism, or wandering aimlessly outside, hoping to find clues with his spiritual perception.

“According to Orianna’s accounts, we might not encounter a single job an entire week. And most jobs are worth less than twenty pounds.” Old Neil rubbed the moonstone by his wrist and sighed.

Following that, he looked at Klein with anticipation.

“If you encounter any similar jobs in the future, remember to inform me.”

Upon hearing Old Neil’s words, Klein suddenly felt a strange feeling arise in him. Therefore, he asked directly, “Mr. Neil, you seem to be lacking in money. How much do you get paid a week? If you aren’t comfortable telling me, just ignore my question.” Old Neil leaned back into the sofa and chuckled.

“This isn’t something that needs hiding. I’ve been here for so many years. At present, I will obtain salaries from both the Church and the police department every week; a total of twelve pounds.”

“A weekly salary of twelve pounds?” Klein blurted out in surprise.

A weekly salary of twelve pounds with fifty-two weeks a year, that meant more than 600 pounds a year!

Back when he read the Tingen Morning Post and Honest Paper, they had mentioned that high-profile lawyers only earned 800 to 1000 pounds a year. And those were the best lawyers!

As for the managers of Benson's trading company, they only earned six pounds a week. That was already quite a decent job.

"Yes, such a salary is actually quite generous, and we do not need to pay any taxes," added Old Neil with a smile.

Klein had heard from Benson that one had to pay E-type taxes when their weekly salaries exceeded one pound. In other words, the government and corporate employees had to pay 3% of taxes if they earned one to two pounds, 5% for two to five pounds, 10% for five to ten pounds, and 15% for ten to twenty pounds, capping at 20% for those above twenty pounds.

Other than that, he also read of four other kinds of taxes on the newspapers. A-type was related to land, housing, and other earnings from material items. It included property and rent. Btype was a tax paid by farmers. C-type was a tax on profits from bonds, funds, and equities. D-type was commercial, finance, or professional income.

"It's something admirable." Klein echoed Old Neil.

"However—" Old Neil shook his head. "Such a salary is insufficient for Beyonders like us who have to frequently study the hidden mysteries, practice and attempt rituals."

"Aren't materials obtainable via application?" asked Klein in puzzlement.

Old Neil scoffed.

"There's a limitation to it. At times, we have to give a sufficient legitimate reason. If you want to learn more and experiment in the field of mysticism, you can only spend your own dime to buy materials. It can be bought internally or at underground markets."

Klein jolted in surprise as he immediately asked, "There are Beyonder materials that are sold in underground markets? I thought the Churches would not permit their existence?" He was lacking in means to obtain materials!

With him having a mysterious organization in its nascent stages, he could not always have them settled via the Nighthawks, right?

"There's no way to control such matters. Yeah, from the viewpoint of mysticism, all beings are sentient with their spirits and they stem from the same source. The materials we use are not limited to those extraordinary creatures. It also comes from ordinary animals, plants, and minerals. For example, the poison hemlock, gold mint leaves, and night vanilla in the bottle of Seer potion; they are items we can encounter frequently in our daily lives. They might not have any extraordinary characteristics, but they have special characteristics. Through concoction and blending, they will derive certain effects. Therefore, this is not a trade that the Church can ban," explained Old Neil in detail.

Without waiting for Klein to say a word, he continued, "Besides, it's not only the core of extraordinary beings that are of use. For example, the Lavos Squid. Apart from its blood, its eyeballs, skin, and tentacles are pretty good materials. Unless the Church captures it entirely with its own manpower, to completely corner and control any outflows would be a tremendous financial burden. The lower the grade of the extraordinary material, the more it is so. They can only do their best to prevent the more special materials from flowing out."

Old Neil suddenly laughed. "There's another important reason. It's better to know of an underground market than not knowing of it. Under the premise that secret organizations have not been fully eliminated, this is a pretty good strategy. Besides, it can help us obtain materials we are lacking. Of course, with the existence of such markets, contraband items will appear. As long as it's not something

ridiculous or overly dangerous, we will turn a blind eye to it. At most, we would use them to enrich our vaults."

"Is it because the few large Churches put each other in place, so no one can take excessive action?" Klein guessed.

Old Neil acknowledged tersely but did not elaborate.

"I'm a Seer. In the future, I'll definitely need to practice and will need more materials. Mr. Neil, can you take me to the underground market to have a look?" Klein requested with a valid reason.

Old Neil appeared to be placed in a difficult position.

"In fact, those guys who are active in those places are mostly not Beyonders. Some of them might be aristocrats that like mystery or rich people who have inclinations towards mysticism... Uh, alright. I have a thirty pound bill that needs paying soon. It wouldn't be convenient for me to head over there for the time being."

"Alright..." Klein never expected the reason to be Old Neil's owing of money.

Moments later, he said with deliberation, "Mr. Neil, do you need me to lend you money? I just earned a commission of ten pounds."

"Haha, there's no need. I'll be able to settle it." Old Neil patted the sofa and slowly stood up. "Sigh, age is truly an enemy that biological creatures can't fight. I'm exhausted from last night's watch. Yeah, revise what I've taught you later this morning. Read more documents. Tomorrow, I'll teach you the foundations of ritualistic magic."

"Alright." Klein got up and bade him farewell by taking off his hat.

When Captain Dunn did not return at noon, Klein pretended that he was still searching for the notebook as he roamed the streets again.

Having earned ten pounds, he no longer needed to wait for the next disbursement of the funds. He could head directly to the Divination Club!

Cogitation and Spirit Vision have been occasionally producing murmurings and illusions. It made him eager to begin 'acting.'

CHAPTER 48: HANASS VINCENT

In the Divination Club situated at the second floor of 13 Howes Street, North Borough of Tingen City.

Klein saw the beautiful lady that attended to visitors once again.

She was still having her brownish-yellow long hair coiled, making her look mature and elegant. It was hard to tell her age.

"Hello, Mr. Glacis isn't here today. Would you like to change fortune-tellers today?" said the beautiful lady with a smile.

Upon hearing that, Klein, who had just taken off his silk hat and put it back on, was immediately surprised.

"You still remember me?"

That was already five days ago!

The woman puckered her lips into a smile.

"You are the first customer that sought Mr. Glacis's services. You are also the only one to this very day. It's hard for me not to have a deep impression of you."

Was this the image of him being penny-wise, pound-foolish?

Klein lampooned himself as he deliberated a question.

"When was the last time Mr. Glacis came to the club?"

The lady shot a glance at him and answered seemingly in recollection, "To be honest, we are unable to grasp when our members will come and go. They have their free will and personal matters to tend to. Well, I do believe that Mr. Glacis hasn't come to the club since he told your fortune that day."

I wish him the best of luck. May the Goddess bless him... Klein prayed and did not ask further. Instead, he asked with a smile, "I'm not here for divination services this time. I plan to join the club."

"Really? That's our pleasure." The lady expressed a timely look of surprise delight. "For the first year as a member, the membership fee is five pounds. It will be one pound a year thereafter. I believe there's no need for me to describe in the details again?"

Klein took out a five-pound note he recently received as he watched Henry Augustus I's portrait depart him.

After seriously checking the anti-counterfeit watermark, the woman stored away the note seriously and handed a form to Klein.

"Please fill in your detailed information. Let me prepare the receipt for you."

There's a receipt? You should bill it to Blackthorn Security Company... Klein was amused by his own thoughts as he picked up a fountain pen on the desk. With the blackish-blue ink, he filled in his name, age, address, and company information.

However, he had deliberately left his date-of-birth empty. To a Seer, that provided profound mysteries about his body through his Life Path Number.

After receiving the receipt and finishing his registration as a member, the lady extended her right hand.

"Congratulations on joining Tingen City's Divination Club. I'm Angelica Barrehart, your hardworking server. This is your member cufflinks. There are special inscriptions on them which will identify you as a member."

"Hello, Madam Angelica." Klein shook her hand and took the dark gold cufflinks.

He realized that the special inscription was written with the root word for 'fortune-teller' in Hermes.

Angelica retracted her right hand and thought for a few seconds.

"Might I ask what divination arts you are most familiar with? Or would you prefer to learn some divination methods from the club? We will consider inviting famous fortune-tellers of the corresponding domain to give classes. We will also introduce you members with similar expertise so that you can have a good time interacting with them."

"I know a bit of every divination art. There's no need to give me any special considerations." Klein replied with some embellishments. In addition, he inquired, "Can I begin telling the fortunes of others? I'm not a total rookie."

He was here to act as a Seer and not learn the divination methods ordinary people could learn.

Angelica maintained a polite smile as she said, "You can tell the fortunes of people anytime in the club. However, before we confirm your skills, we will not promote you when our customers ask. How much do you plan on charging for your fortune-telling?"

"Two pence." Klein decided to gain at advantage with price while he was still unknown.

"We will go by the standard of taking an eighth, so we will be taking a quarterpence for fees..." Angelica repeated the various rules first before writing Klein's information into the fortuneteller album which customers could choose from.

After all of this was done, she pointed at the meeting room at the far end of the corridor with a smile.

"Mr. Hanass Vincent is currently explaining astrolabe divination. You can find a quiet spot to listen in. You can also raise your questions if there are any queries."

"Alright." Klein walked toward the meeting room with his interest piqued. He wanted to know the differences between what Hanass Vincent and Old Neil said.

At that moment, Angelica chased up and whispered, "Mr. Moretti, would you want coffee or tea? We provide Sibe black tea, Southville coffee, and Desi coffee."

Klein, who had been reading the papers regularly, knew that these coffees and black tea were considered as one of the inferior varieties, but he also knew that they were definitely of better quality than the ones he had at home. After some thought, he said, "A cup of Southville coffee. Three teaspoons of sugar without milk please."

Loen Kingdom's Southville was famous for its beer and red wine; many important figures were fond of them. However, their coffee was relatively unknown.

"Alright, I'll send it to you in a bit." Angelica pointed towards the meeting room.

Klein slowly walked to the half-closed door and heard a voice in a thick Awwa accent explaining, "Astrolabe divination is a relatively more complex one among the divination arts..."

But that's only for ordinary people... Klein silently tagged on a sentence for the speaker. He saw about five tables placed in a circle inside the meeting room. It surrounded a middle-aged man in a black classic robe, Hanass Vincent.

The gentleman had obvious dark circles. His brown hair was thick and hard. Each strand stood firmly like a porcupine's spikes.

Apart from that, there was nothing unique about him.

Upon seeing Klein enter, Hanass Vincent nodded gently without stopping his class. He only slowed down his speech.

Klein had one hand in his pocket while the other held his cane. He found a seat to the sides and sat down, leaning back comfortably in the process. He scanned the circle of six members. There were four men and two women.

Some of them were attentively taking notes, whispering, or returning Klein a rueful smile.

After placing his cane down, Klein adjusted his halved top hat and tapped his glabella twice in the process.

He cast his gaze at Hanass and saw the different colors, brightness, and thickness of his aura.

“Dark red. He’s a little worried... Actually, every other part of his body is healthy except that part. I wonder what’s wrong...” Klein listened to the class while muttering to himself.

At that moment, he clasped his right hand and covered his mouth to prevent his laughter from sounding. He suddenly felt like he was a quack.

He was rather pleased with his Spirit Vision ability. Although he could only make a general judgment and not the details, it was enough to gain him much useful information.

After surveying his surroundings, he tapped his glabella twice again as though he was pondering over what Hanass had just said.

Astrolabe divination was one of the astromancy divination methods. However, ordinary people could also attempt to interpret things. For instance, the most basic birth horoscope was to determine the inquirer’s fate by determining the positions of the sun, moon, Blue Planet, and Scarlet Planet at their birth, the corresponding spots in the sky, matching the representative symbols to the astrolabe, and the corresponding situations of the different constellations.

This required the fortune-teller to be able to calculate the states of the planets and constellations which was rather complicated. Of course, there were publications that aided people to look up the values. Some even simplified it by making a vague read with just the constellations.

Klein listened silently without interjecting or asking any questions. From time to time, he would caress the hanging topaz at his sleeve or take a sip of the Southville coffee which Angelica had brought in.

After some time, Hanass rubbed his glabella and said, “Perhaps you will need to attempt at creating your own astrolabe. Ask me if you have any questions. I will be in Moonstone.”

After he left, a young man in a white shirt and black vest got up with a smile and walked to Klein’s side.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Edward Steve.”

“My pleasure. I’m Klein Moretti.” Klein stood up and returned the bow.

“Astrolabes are too complicated. Every time I hear about it, I can’t help but doze off,” said Edward self-deprecatingly.

Klein grinned and said, “That’s because Mr. Vincent can’t help but pass the knowledge he grasps to us. It’s like giving us an Intis feast. It’s just indigestible.”

“I’d be able to finish the Intis feast. They usually use a huge plate to serve tiny bits of food.” Edward chuckled and sat up. He asked out of curiosity, “Are you new? I’ve not seen you in the two years I was here.”

“I just joined the club today,” answered Klein frankly.

“What are you good at? I’m best at tarot and poker divination,” Edward casually asked.

“I know a little of everything, but just a little.” Klein gave a description he used to give himself.

He was not being modest since there was just too much mysterious knowledge he had not grasped in the domain of divination.

Just as the other members were thinking of talking about horoscope divination, Angelica walked into the meeting room.

“Mr. Steve, someone wants you to tell their fortunes.” “Alright.” Edward stood up with a smile.

“I can tell you are an excellent fortune-teller,” said Klein as he looked at him.

“No, it’s because my price is most suitable,” said Edward with a soft chortle. “When ordinary people come to have their fortunes told, they will absolutely not choose the most expensive ones. And unless they had their heads kicked by asses, they would definitely not be choosing the cheapest few. It’s easiest to gain opportunities if you are in the middle.”

I’m one of those that had their heads kicked by asses... When he saw Edward leave, Klein suddenly shook his head with a wry smile.

It seems the price I set is problematic...

He stood up, picked up his cane, and left the meeting room. He found Angelica again.

“I wish to change the prices of my divination. Uh, set it to eight pence.”

Angelica took a deep look at him and said, “We will satisfy your request, but we will also tell customers that you only recently joined the club.”

“No problem.” Klein did not mind as he nodded.

At times, mystery was also an important element for a Seer to attract customers.

After changing his details, Klein returned to the meeting room.

At that moment, he saw Hanass Vincent walk out of Moonstone. He held a silver-coated mirror.

This well-known fortune-teller said to the five members in the meeting room, “I recently learned a new divination art. Magic mirror divination. Does anyone want to learn?”

Magic mirror divination? That’s not safe... Klein paused outside the meeting room and frowned.

As a Seer who had just stepped through the gates of mysticism, Klein did not dare to claim he knew much. However, he was certain he knew more than ordinary people. He was aware that the various kinds of divination arts could be split into three categories based on particular standards.

And that standard was based on the source of the revelation!

The first category of divination included tarot, poker, pendulums, dowsing canes, and dreams. By using the inquirer's own spirituality and its communication with the spirit world to gain a revelation, it could be interpreted for an answer. However, spirit pendulums and dowsing canes had very high requirements of one's spirituality, Soul Body, and Astral Projection. Non-Beyonders were unable to obtain precise or clear revelations. Card divination provided fixed symbolism, presenting even an average person's faint revelation. Dreams were somewhere in between the other forms.

The second category included Spirit Numerology and astromancy, as well as their derived forms. The fortune-teller used either the personal details of the inquirer, or changes in nature before using calculations, inference, and interpretation to answer their questions. With this method, the initiative did not lie in the inquirer, but the fortune-teller.

The third category used an external third party, separate from the inquirer and the fortune-teller. The Ouija boards that Klein was familiar with from his previous life belonged in this category. They used rituals to ask for a direct answer from the unknown or the supernatural. Even though there was a high chance that an average person would not succeed, there were cases where they managed to communicate with malicious spirits or entities that drove them to insanity. These methods of divination usually led to tragedies.

The magic mirror divination that Hanass Vincent mentioned belonged to the third category. In mysticism, mirrors were connected to the unknown and mystery, like they were the doors of the spiritual world. Thus, Klein stopped outside the meeting room, intending to learn how the famous fortune-teller would explain the divination. Klein wanted to ascertain if he needed to inform the captain or not, raiding him at night.

Of course, there was a safe way to do the magic mirror divination; one could ask for answers from the seven orthodox divinities. Even if it was very difficult for an ordinary person to receive any real revelations, they would not be in any danger or suffer any after effects.

The magic mirror divinations that were strictly controlled by the Nighthawks and Mandated Punishers were those that asked evil gods or mysterious existences for help. Furthermore, the fortune-teller couldn't randomly fabricate things. Some phrases or qualities had the potential to invite the attention of unknown entities.

In the world where the powers of the Beyonders exist, such divinations would often lead to tragedy. Klein even suspected that the original Klein, Welch, and Naya had committed such a forbidden divination by following the instructions of the Antigonus family's diary.

At that moment, Hanass also explained the principle behind magic mirror divination and described the actual process.

"First, you choose a suitable time and date according to the divinity you believe in. You can decide this using the Astromancy Manual. For example, we all know that Sundays symbolize the Evernight Goddess, for Sunday is the embodiment of rest. 2 to 3 in the early morning, 9 to 10 in the morning, 4 to 5 in the evening, and 11 to midnight are all related to the moon; thus, they are controlled by the Evernight Goddess. Thus, fortunetellers that pray to the Evernight Goddess can use magic mirror divination during these times on a Sunday."

Quite a good foundation... Klein nodded slightly while using the half-closed door to the meeting room to conceal himself.

It had to be said that with the seven major churches keeping each other in check, some mysticism knowledge had indeed leaked. For example, many of the meanings behind the symbolism could be found in the Astromancy Manual. However, without the potions or Beyonder powers, ordinary people were unable to obtain the desired effects.

"Second, we must scrutinize the mirror carefully. It must be a mirror coated with silver. You place the mirror at the position representing the moon..." Hanass demonstrated with the prop in his hand.

No, what he needs now is spirit dowsing. First, choose a position and recite the phrase, 'This place is suitable for magic mirror divination' seven times in your head, then see which direction the pendulum turns. Clockwise for true, counter-clockwise for false... Of course, if you are asking for answers from a malicious supernatural entity, the position would not matter. Rather, it would depend on whether the entity is interested in answering your questions... Klein silently corrected him.

At this point, he felt like a teacher listening in on a lesson...

Hanass Vincent could not hear Klein's mental musings as he described the preparations in detail in a normal tone.

When the members finished taking notes, he continued explaining, "After showering, confirm that you have drawn all your curtains and locked your doors. After that, light up a candle and place it in front of the mirror before sincerely praying to the divinity you believe in. Try to keep your questions simple as there's no need for fanciful embellishment... After praying seven times, pick up your mirror and gently toss it on the ground. Make sure to be gentle... Remember the way it shatters as that is a revelation from the gods... I will tell you the main symbolisms in a second."

Phew, this is orthodox magic mirror divination. Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he walked into the meeting room and sat back down in his previous seat. He finished the rest of his Southville coffee in one gulp.

So-called "orthodox" divination meant that it was possible to obtain revelations, but it was impossible to truly interpret it.

And for Beyonders who reached this step, they could look straight into the mirror to obtain clear information if they received a response!

As there were many potential symbolisms after the shattering, Hanass taught for a long while. He was not done even when Edward Steve returned to the room after finishing his fortunetelling.

Klein did not ask what Edward did for his fortune-telling or what method did he use since it was an unspoken rule among fortune-tellers. While acting as a Seer, he naturally had to abide by it strictly unless the other party mentioned it.

"I discovered that many a time, our interpretation is too vague, as though it's meeting different requests, allowing different people to find a description of themselves from the interpretation." Edward drank a mouthful of Sibe black tea and said with a soft sigh. "For example, those that encounter adversities and calamities will eventually see the light of hope. Heh heh, but no one knows when the light of hope will come. For example, a journey might not be very smooth-sailing, but you will definitely arrive alive. Hehe, the dead will not retort me."

As he did not listen from the beginning, he ignored Hanass's magic mirror divination class.

"Survival bias," added Klein with a smile.

Survival bias generally meant that a lot of statistics would only include those who were alive and lucky. The data would ignore the dead; therefore, the results would be clearly biased.

"Right. Emperor Roselle was really a philosopher," marveled Edward.

... Speechless, Klein raised his empty cup and pretended to take a sip.

The members were fully immersed in the study of horoscopes and magic mirror divination the entire afternoon. Occasionally, they would also discuss with Klein and Edward.

And when that happened, Klein would try his best to meet his duty as an informal member of the Nighthawks. He would try hard to steer the topic away from anything related to Beyonders or dangerous ideas.

However, he failed at the thing he wanted to do the most. A few inquirers came, but none of them picked him to do their fortunetelling.

Perhaps I have to be more proactive in entertaining them. Should I use a few phrases like 'you are plagued with bad luck,' 'you have been unlucky recently,' or 'nothing you do will happen smoothly?' No, that's nothing like a Seer... With this in mind, Klein could not help but shake his head in self-deprecation.

He picked up his cane, stood up, and left after bidding everyone farewell.

At half past five, Edward Steve put on his coat and was prepared to walk out the Divination Club when he suddenly saw a familiar figure.

"Good afternoon, Glacis. Long time no see," he greeted with a smile. He saw his friend with similar interests as him wear his usual format suit with a black bow tie. In front of his chest hung a monocle.

Immediately following that, he noticed that his friend did not look well. Even his soft blond hair looked dry.

"Good afternoon, Edward... Cough." Glacis with his hat in hand suddenly used his fist to cover his mouth as he coughed a few times.

Edward asked out of concern, "You seem to be ill?"

"A very serious illness. It even turned into pneumonia. If it wasn't for my wife who met an impressive apothecary and gave me a magical medicine, you would have probably had to visit me at the cemetery." Glacis's tone was filled with a lingering fear and joy.

"Lord, I can't believe it. You were so healthy previously. Look at you, you look so frail now! I remember when I did divination on you, there were no signs that indicated that you would get a serious illness." Edward waved his cane and said with an astonished sigh.

"My own divination had the same result as yours. Perhaps we are not qualified fortune-tellers. Besides..." Glacis suddenly recalled the happenings on Monday as his expression turned abnormally serious.

At that moment, the beautiful lady, Angelica, came over and bowed with a pleasant smile.

After exchanging greetings, she first showed concern for Glacis's health and provided some suggestions. Then, she mentioned in passing, "Mr. Glacis, Mr. Moretti, who requested your divination services previously, has joined our club as well."

"The one who got me to tell his fortune?" Glacis's eyes lit up immediately. "Lord, where is he?"

"He just left." Angelica and Edward were unable to comprehend Glacis's abnormal reaction.

Glacis took two steps in agitation and said, "The next time he comes, please ask him when he will come if I'm not around!"

"Glacis, what happened? Did that Mr. Klein Moretti do something to you?" asked Edward in puzzlement.

Glacis raised his arm and stared straight into Edward's and Angelica's probing gazes. He said in excitement, "He's a very, very, very magical..."

He lowered his arm and said after using "very" thrice, "Doctor!"

CHAPTER 50: OLD NEIL'S METHOD OF REPAYMENT

Half past seven in the evening, around the Moretti family's dining table.

"Klein, why do you need to be at work so early as a consultant? Would emergency matters at the security company be more dangerous?" Benson forked a potato from a dish of potato-stewed beef as he raised the matter in concern.

Klein carefully spat out the bones from a pan-fried fish and gave his prepared answer.

"A batch of historical documents needed immediate shipping to Backlund. I had to be present to handle the handover and make sure there was nothing missing. As you can guess, the bunch of fist-swinging bastards don't know any Feysac."

Upon hearing his answer, Benson, who had finished chewing his food, could not help but sigh.

"Knowledge is truly important."

Making use of this opportunity, Klein took out the remaining five-pound note and handed it to Benson.

"This is my additional payment I received today. It's time you get some decent clothes too."

"Five pounds?" Benson and Melissa said in unison.

Benson took the note and looked at it repeatedly. He said in both shock and doubt, "This security company sure is generous..."

His weekly salary was one pound ten soli, which meant six pounds exactly every four weeks. He only earned one additional pound from this additional payment!

And with that salary, he had managed to support his siblings, giving them a decent place to stay and allowing them to eat meat two to three times a week. Every year, they could get a few new clothes!

"Are you doubting me?" Klein deliberately returned with a question.

Benson chuckled. "I doubt you have the ability nor the guts to rob a bank."

"You aren't someone who can lie," Melissa answered seriously after lowering her fork and knife.

I-I'm now someone used to lying... Klein immediately felt a little ashamed.

Although it was a result of the circumstances of his reality, his sister's belief in him left him melancholic.

"It was relatively urgent and important today. I also played a crucial role... which is the reason for the five pounds," Klein explained.

In a way, what he said was the truth.

As for the five pounds that he would be reimbursed with—the one he would use to join the Divination Club—he planned on concealing it. Firstly, if he brought five pounds home again, he would truly scare his siblings, making them suspect he was doing something illegal. Secondly, he had to save to buy additional materials to practice being a Seer and to grasp more mysticism knowledge.

Benson bit off a mouthful of wheat bread in satisfaction and thought for more than ten seconds.

"The work I'm at doesn't need any decent clothes. Well, to be precise, the clothes at home are sufficient."

Without waiting for Klein to persuade him, he suggested, "With this additional income, we would truly have savings. I plan on buying a few books on accountancy and studying. Klein, Melissa, I do not wish that my weekly salary remain below two pounds in five years. Heh, as you know, my boss and manager have shit for brains. Their mouths stink the moment they open them."

“Excellent idea,” agreed Klein. He also took the opportunity to steer the conversation. “Why don’t you read some of the grammar books in my room? To be truly dignified and to earn a handsome pay, that’s something rather critical.”

Perhaps, in the times to come, the civil servant examinations will appear in Loen Kingdom. Preparing ahead of time would give him the advantage...

Benson’s eyes lit up when he heard that.

“I’ve indeed forgotten about that. Here, let’s toast to a beautiful future.”

He did not drink rye beer. Instead, he poured clear oyster soup into three cups and clinked his cup with his siblings’.

After drinking the clear soup, he looked at his sister who was wrestling with the pan-fried fish. He chuckled and said, “Aside from Benson’s books, I think Melissa needs a new dress too.” Melissa looked up and shook her head incessantly.

“No, I think it’s best...”

“To save it up.” Klein finished the sentence for her.

“Yeah.” Melissa nodded in agreement.

“In fact, if you do not seek the best fabrics and the newest designs, it would not be too expensive. We can save up the remaining money,” said Klein in a manner which did not allow for disagreement.

Benson added, “Melissa, are you planning on wearing the old dress again to Selena’s sixteenth birthday bash?”

Selena Wood was Melissa’s classmate and good friend. She came from quite a good family background. Her elder brother was a practicing solicitor and her father was a senior employee of Backlund Bank’s Tingen branch.

However, the so-called bash was only a dinner invitation to friends where they chatted and played cards.

“Alright.” Melissa lowered her head and mumbled a response. Then, she ruthlessly forked a piece of stewed beef.

After a short silence, she suddenly recalled something and looked up abruptly.

“Mrs. Shaud from next door got her maidservant to send a calling card over. She wishes to make a formal visit on Sunday, at four in the afternoon tomorrow. She wants to get to know her new neighbors.”

“Mrs. Shaud?” Klein looked at his siblings, confounded.

Benson rapped the side of the table with his fingers and appeared to be thinking.

“Mrs. Shaud from 4 Daffodil Street? I met her husband before. He’s a senior solicitor.”

“Senior solicitor... Perhaps he knows Selena’s brother,” said Melissa with some hints of delight.

We are at 2 Daffodil Street... Klein nodded slightly.

“It’s imperative we get to know our neighbors, but as you know, I still have to be at the company on Sunday. I only have time off on Monday. Please pass my apologies to Mrs. Shaud.”

With that said, he suddenly recalled the neighbors of his former life when he was young, as well as the neighbors in the apartment from Iron Cross Street. He was amused as he sighed lightly.

“To have formal visits... Shouldn’t neighbors get to know each other through natural interaction?”

“Haha, Klein, that’s because you aren’t aware. You have read a lot of newspapers recently, but you have not broached the magazines catered towards families and middle-aged women. They placed families with an annual income of a hundred to a thousand pounds as middle-class. They promoted it as the framework of the entire kingdom and praised how the middleclass doesn’t have the arrogance of the aristocrats and the wealthy, nor are they as crass as the low-income brackets.”

Benson lightly and happily explained, “These magazines impart many simplified ceremonies which the aristocrats practice in their interactions. As such, it becomes a target of the middleclass. Thus, this results in the differences between intimate calls, semi-formal calls, and formal calls.”

As he spoke, he shook his head and chuckled.

“Typically, gentlemen, madams, and ladies who view themselves in this class will be very particular about details. They will visit their neighbors and friends from two to six in the afternoon. It’s known as a morning call [1].”

“Morning call?” Klein and Melissa asked in surprise.

Why was a visit from two to six in the afternoon a morning call?

Benson put down his fork and knife, threw his hands up, and smiled.

“I do not know why either. All I did was read the magazines my female colleague brought. Yeah, perhaps it’s because they wear their morning gowns to make the call...”

Morning gowns were a form of formal attire worn during Mass or gatherings. Later, it was considered as formal attire for the day, different from the formal attire for evening functions.

“Alright. Remember to buy some good coffee powder and tea leaves in the afternoon. Buy some muffins and lemon egg tarts from Mrs. Smyrin. We must not ill-treat our neighbors.” Klein chuckled as he dipped his remaining bread into the meat sauces, grabbed some potato and put it into his mouth.

...

The next morning was a Sunday morning.

Klein finished the last mouthful of inferior tea, put down the newspapers, and wore his halved top hat. Picking up his silverinlaid black cane, he sauntered out the door and took a public carriage to Zouteland Street.

He greeted Rozanne who was planning to sleep in the break room after finishing her night duty. After which, he went all the way down to the basement.

After turning a corner, he met a Nighthawk member, Sleepless Royale Reideen.

She looked like a cold lady. Her brows were long and slender, sitting atop large eyes. Her hair was a silky-smooth black.

“Good morning, Madam Reideen,” Klein greeted with a smile.

Royale used her deep blue eyes to glance at him and nodded indiscernibly in return.

The two quickly passed by each other when Royale stopped and said with her eyes trained forward, “Ritualistic magic is a very dangerous thing.”

Ah... Klein was taken aback. By the time he turned around, all he saw was her departing back.

“Thank you.” He frowned and shouted at Royale Reideen’s back.

After taking a left band, he quickly met Old Neil inside the armory, as well as Bredt who should not have been there.

“Let’s go to my place. I’ve already received the corresponding materials. Bredt has agreed to watch the armory for me,” said Old Neil with a chuckle.

Klein was immediately surprised.

"We aren't doing it here?"

Old Neil held a silver chest and tutted.

"There's no space here to practice ritualistic magic."

Klein did not ask further. He followed Old Neil up to the streets and took a public carriage to the North Borough's suburbs.

Old Neil's place was a bungalow. The garden in front of it was filled with roses, gold mint, and other "materials."

The moment he entered, there was a carpeted foyer. There were two high-back chairs and an umbrella rack.

Through the foyer was an expansive living room. The walls were plastered with light-colored wallpaper. The floors were a dark brown color. In the middle of the room was a tiny carpet with floral imprints and placed above it was a heavy round table.

Surrounding the table were comfortable long benches, singleseaters, and a piano.

"My deceased wife loved music." Old Neil pointed at the piano and mentioned in passing, "The sofa and coffee table are in the bedrooms... Let's do the ritualistic magic in the living room." "Alright," Klein replied cautiously.

After Old Neil put down the silver chest, he laughed and said, "Let me demonstrate to you ritualistic magic. Make sure to observe and remember the ritual."

As he spoke, he took out a fake goatskin parchment from the chest. It was specially made and it had strange pictures drawn on it with black ink that exuded a serene fragrance.

Klein kept watching and finally discovered that Old Neil was seemingly, likely, possibly drawing an IOU!

When Old Neil filled in the corresponding field with the number "30" and the corresponding "£" symbol, Klein could not help but ask out of puzzlement and confusion, "Mr. Neil, what kind of ritualistic magic are you doing?"

Old Neil coughed and answered very seriously, "I'll be using magic to settle that debt of thirty pounds today."

You can do that? Klein's eyes widened as his mouth gaped.

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1. The descriptions of calling cards and morning calls are facts regarding socializing in the Victorian era.

Using magic to settle an IOU?

Is he trying to curse his debtor to death or create counterfeit notes?

I might not have a solution to the problem, but I can finish you instead?

...

All sorts of thoughts appeared in Klein's mind as he looked at Old Neil oddly.

He seriously considered the possibility of calling the cops, no—of informing the Nighthawks.

Old Neil shot a glance at him and said peeved, "I can see ignorance, foolishness, and the weak and shameless disbelief in your eyes. Didn't Dunn tell you the maxim of the Mystery Pryers? Do as you wish but do no harm!"

Although this maxim originated from the secret and evil Moses Ascetic Order organization, Beyonders who choose the path of Moses Ascetic Order have proven that it's right through their own experiences. As long as one strictly abides to it and shows the needed fear and reverence, the risk of losing control will be minimized. The contrary has similarly been established.

"Your suspicion towards me is an insult to Mystery Pryers!" "Sorry." Klein did not hesitate to apologize.

He had indeed forgotten that Dunn Smith had once mentioned the maxim.

Old Neil was not truly angry. In a blink of an eye, he chuckled.

"A pity. Very few Beyonders choose to be Seers. There is no corresponding maxim to help you."

But I have Emperor Roselle's diaries... Yes, strictly abiding to the maxim has a hint of "acting..." Klein suddenly came to this thought as he nodded as if in deep thought.

Old Neil did not continue. He removed the vases and other items from the round table and placed them in a corner.

Immediately following that, he took out both a crimson red and black candle from the silver chest. He explained, "If ordinary people attempt ritualistic magic, they have to follow the results from astromancy or read corresponding manuals. They have to choose suitable dates and times. For example, the day representing the Goddess—the period when She rules over the moon. But for us Beyonders, especially Beyonders good in this domain, there's no need for that. Our acute spiritual perception and potent Astral Projections are key.

"Of course, if you are not confident about the ritualistic magic you are attempting, it's best to choose a suitable date and time. It can increase the probability of success.

"Ah right. This is based on a premise. Remember carefully to abide strictly by the rules!"

Old Neil placed two candles and turned to the side and looked at Klein, saying very solemnly, "Low-Sequence Beyonders are not strong enough. Almost all the ritualistic magic they can perform are the seeking of external powers and help. Therefore, you can only consider orthodox divinities like the Goddess or the Lord of Storms. Absolutely— absolutely do not attempt to communicate with the unknown or unpredictable existences. Even if people believe in them or the promises recorded are filled with enticements!

"Believe me, don't take any chances. As long as you attempt once, you will go down a slippery slope into the abyss with no return. Any work or resistance will only slow it down with no way to change the trajectory."

"I'll remember!" Klein said in a deep voice. However, he felt a little afraid.

My luck enhancement ritual has apparently sought power from an unknown and unpredictable existence...

Furthermore, I have gained powers capable of pulling people into the fog that even a senior Beyonder like the Hanged Man finds unbelievable. Well... At least I think he is a senior Beyonder...

Thankfully, I haven't gone mad or have any signs of losing control...

While worrying over this, he proactively changed the subject.

"So, Nighthawks should seek the help of the Goddess?"

"No one will stop you if you pray to the Lord of Storms. However, we are unable to tell from our ritualistic magic whether He replies with malicious intent or not. The outcome will be distorted in unpredictable ways." Old Neil successfully made Klein give up the idea in a joking manner.

There was no so-called "best," only "necessary!"

After his exhortations, Old Neil picked up a crimson red candle and said, "By using candles made of moon flowers and dark-red sandalwood, it will represent the Goddess's identity as Lady of Crimson in the ritualistic magic."

He pointed to the black candles and said, "Candles made of night vanilla and slumber flowers represent the night."

As he spoke, he placed the black candle on the top left end of the round table while the red candle was placed on the top right end.

"Why do we symbolize the Goddess with only two candles? She is also the Mother of Concealment,

Empress of Misfortune and Horror, and Mistress of Repose and Silence." Old Neil chuckled.

"That's right. This is something I wished you asked.

"Before their fall, the Moses Ascetic Order had a very good relationship with the Church. Their beliefs and results on ritualistic magic have heavily influenced us.

"They believe that all objects are numeric. Every number has a spirituality and in ritualistic magic, 0 represents the unknown or Chaos. It symbolizes the state of the universe before it was born. 1 represents a beginning, the first Creator. 2 represents the world and various divinities that were produced from His body. 3 represents contact between divinities and material objects to create all things. Here, using two candles represents the Goddess while the third candle is for you.

"Which two candles and which two symbols to have depend on the intended effects of the ritualistic magic."

Three begets all things [1]*? All things stem from three?* Klein could not help but recall certain things from his previous life.

Seeing Klein listen attentively, Old Neil took a third candle and said, "This is the candle representing 'me.' It's a very ordinary candle which only has a little bit of mint added. Take note that plants like roses, lemons, mint, moon flower, night vanilla, and slumber flower are beloved and cherished by the Goddess.

"Viewing it from another angle, the three candles represent the bodies, spiritualities and godhood of every person."

After finishing the description, Old Neil placed the third candle in the middle of the round table.

He then took out a bottle of concocted "Full Moon Essence Oil," a huge cauldron engraved with the Dark Sacred Emblem, a silver knife with gorgeous patterns, a cup of water, and a saucer of coarse salt.

"To Beyonders who are not good at ritualistic magic, there is a need for bells, crystal balls, silver cups, incense or other supplementary items. However, Mystery Pryers and Seers have no need for that. These artifacts are already sufficient."

Old Neil placed the fake goatskin parchment with the IOU just below the cauldron and used a special quill to hold down one corner.

He turned to Klein and said, "Ritualistic magic needs a clean spiritual environment where you will not be disturbed. And that requires us to create it. The steps are to first enter Cogitation. Focus your mind and with the supplementary items, draw out our strength, and construct it around us. For example, Ray Bieber's house had used Holy Night Powder while I'll be using a ritual silver dagger.

"Throughout the entire process, we have to go according to the outcome we desire to confirm the symbolism and corresponding incantation. Incantations are best done in Hermes because ancient Hermes stemmed from Nature. It's akin to ancient Dragonese and ancient Elvish. The effects are very direct, lacking the necessary concealment and protection. It easily causes the caster to fall into danger. This is also why it has been modified. However, it's more effective.

"Alright, I have to focus on the ritualistic magic. I won't explain things to you any further. Pay attention by watching and listening. Remember any problems and ask me when everything is done."

"Alright." Klein took two steps back and trained his eyes on Old Neil.

Old Neil's eyes rapidly darkened as invisible wind around him spun.

He was silent for a moment, going from left to right, then up to down, using his psyche to cause friction and consecutively light up the three candles.

Following that, he picked up the silver knife and stabbed it into the coarse salt. Then, he chanted in Hermes:

"I sanctify you, blade of pure silver!

"I cleanse and purify you, allowing you to serve me in this ritual!

...

"In the name of the Evernight Goddess, the Lady of Crimson...

"You have been sanctified!"

After a short but powerful syllable, Old Neil drew a silver knife and inserted it into a cup of clear water. Then, he raised it and pointed to the space beyond the round table.

He aimed the blade tip in the periphery and took a step forward, circling the round table. Every step he took made Klein feel an invisible energy spew out of the silver knife. It was filled with spirituality as it connected with the air, forming a completely sealed wall.

After walking one round, the altar was completely isolated from its surroundings.

Old Neil stood in front of the round table and put the silver knife down. He picked up the bottle of Full Moon Essence Oil and dripped three drops on the black, dark red, and ordinary candles.

Sizzle!

A thin mist emanated as everything seemed to become veiled in mystery.

Old Neil put down the glass bottle and looked at the fake goatskin parchment silently for two minutes. Then, he picked up the quill and drew a mark he controlled—a square that framed all the content, indicating that he was in control of the debt.

Following that, he drew another 'cross,' indicating that it was canceled.

Upon reaching this step, he picked up the parchment with one hand and tapped his glabella with the other to activate his Spirit Vision.

Another invisible and exuberant energy bloomed as Old Neil whispered a chant:

"I pray for the power of the dark night.

"I pray for the power of the crimson.

"I pray for the Goddess's loving grace.

"Please provide me with the funds to pay this IOU.

"Night vanilla, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

"Moon flower, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

...

Klein was completely flabbergasted listening from the side. All sorts of thoughts arose in him.

Such an incantation can work?

Although it was recited from written Hermes...

Isn't this way too simple and down to earth?

Wouldn't the Goddess be angry and multiply the debt severalfold?

At that moment, the candlelight lit up suddenly!

After Old Neil finished his incantation, he closed his eyes for two minutes. He picked up the Full Moon Essence Oil and dripped one drop onto each of the three candles.

Immediately following that, he grabbed the parchment and pulled it close to the candle representing "me." When it ignited, he immediately threw it into the cauldron.

Old Neil closed his eyes again as he seemed to sense the burning of the IOU.

He opened his eyes after a moment and looked toward the black Sacred Emblem on the cauldron. The parchment was already completely incinerated.

"Praise the Lady!" Old Neil tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon. Then, he extinguished the candles in the opposite order as he lit them.

After finishing everything, he used the silver knife to rip apart the invisible wall around him.

A huge wind stirred immediately as Old Neil heaved a sigh of relief.

"It's done."

"That's it?" Klein asked in a daze. "Has the IOU been settled? How?"

"I don't know either. Anyways, it will be settled in a reasonable manner," said Old Neil with a smile as he threw up his hands.

This... Klein was unsure what expression or words to use as a response.

Isn't this a little unreliable?

---

1. This is a Daoism saying: Dao begets One, One begets Two, Two begets Three, Three begets all things.

"Stop thinking about the bloody IOU. Let's discuss the ritualistic magic." Old Neil put away the candles, cauldron, silver knife, and other items with a relaxed expression.

Klein really wanted to shrug his shoulders like the Americans in his previous life, but ultimately could not bring himself to do something that ungentlemanly.

He turned his focus toward the ritualistic magic and threw out detailed questions that puzzled him, receiving answers from them. For example, the incantations had a particular format. As long as they were satisfied and the key meaning was expressed in Hermes, the rest could be left to one's creativity. Of course, blasphemy or disrespectful descriptions were absolutely forbidden.

The mysticism class lasted until noon before Old Neil coughed twice.

"We have to return to Zouteland Street."

With that said, he grumbled in an indistinct manner, "To get these bloody materials, I missed my beloved breakfast." Klein looked around both amused and puzzled.

"Mr. Neil, do you have a chef? Or a maidservant in charge of cooking?"

A weekly salary of twelve pounds could hire several servants!

According to the newspapers, with board and lodging provided, hiring an ordinary chef cost anywhere between twelve to fifteen soli a week. It did not even need a pound. A maidservant to do miscellaneous chores was even cheaper. Their weekly salaries ranged between three soli six pence to six soli. Of course, one could not bear any hope of them having any culinary skills.

Uh, that's not right. With Mr. Neil's debt of thirty pounds, it's only normal he doesn't hire any chefs or servants...

It seems I've asked another question I should not have asked...

While Klein regretted his question, Old Neil shook his head without minding it.

"I often attempt ritualistic magic, research extraordinary items, and read corresponding documents at home, so I don't nor is it possible that I hire ordinary people as chefs, valets or maidservants. I only hire someone to clean up the place regularly. And if they are not ordinary people, do you think they will be willing to do such jobs?"

"I seem to have asked a silly question. It's possibly because I will not do anything that involves mysticism at home," explained Klein in a self-deprecating manner.

Old Neil had long stood up, wore his round felt hat, and while walking out the door, rambled on.

"I seem to smell pan-fried foie gras... Once the IOU is completely settled, I'll definitely have one set! For lunch, I'll definitely eat roasted pork glazed with apple juices. No, that's not enough. I must have a sausage infused with mashed potatoes..."

You are making me hungry... Klein swallowed his saliva as he caught up to Old Neil and headed for the nearby public carriage stop.

After returning to Zouteland Street, Old Neil suddenly grunted after stepping down the carriage.

"What do I see? Goddess, what am I seeing?"

He was suddenly as nimble as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old lad. He quickly came to the roadside and picked up an item.

Klein leaned close out of curiosity and looked carefully. He realized it was a wallet with fine workmanship.

With his lack of experience, he could barely tell if the dark brown wallet was made of buffalo skin or sheepskin, but he noticed a small light-blue logo embroidered on the side of the wallet—a white dove spreading its wings as if ready to take off.

That was Klein's first impression. The second thing he noticed was the stack of paper notes in the bulging wallet.

There were more than twenty gray notes imprinted with black ink—gold pounds!

Old Neil opened up the wallet and pulled out the notes. When he looked at it carefully, he immediately chuckled.

"Ten-pound notes. The honorable Founder and Protector, William I. Wow, Goddess, there's a total of thirty notes. There's also a few five-pound notes, one-pound and five-soli notes."

More than three hundred pounds? That's a huge amount of money in every meaning of the word! I might not even earn that much in ten years... Klein's breathing turned heavy involuntarily.

As the amount of gold pounds was immense, picking up such a wallet was equivalent to picking up a briefcase of banknotes in his previous life.

"I wonder which gentleman dropped it... He can't be someone ordinary," analyzed Klein calmly.

Such a wallet was clearly not a woman's.

"There's no need to care who he is," said Old Neil with a chuckle. "It's not like we attempted to divine and take money that doesn't belong to us. We should wait here for a moment. I believe the gentleman will soon be back searching for it. It's not something that can be given up no matter who it is."

Klein heaved a sigh of relief. He had a brand-new understanding of Old Neil's morals.

He was rather worried that he would have used the Goddess's bestowment as an excuse and paid off his debt. He was still wondering how to prevent it and persuade him otherwise.

Is this "do as you wish, but do no harm?" Klein suddenly learned something new.

The duo did not wait more than a minute by the streets when a luxurious four-wheeled carriage zoomed over. Its side had a light blue logo with a dove spreading its wings.

The carriage stopped, and a middle-aged man dressed in a black formal suit with a bow tie of the same color alighted. He looked at the wallet, took off his hat, and said politely, "Sirs, that should be my master's wallet."

"Your logo is proof of everything, but I need to make additional verifications. This is to be responsible for all parties. Might I ask how much money is there in the wallet?" replied Old Neil politely.

The middle-aged man was taken aback as he said in a selfdeprecating manner almost immediately, "As a butler, I do not know how much money Master had in his wallet. Sorry. Please permit me to ask."

"As you wish." Old Neil gestured for him to do as he pleased.

The middle-aged man walked to the carriage's side and through the window, conversed with the person within.

He approached Klein and Old Neil again and smiled.

"More than 300 pounds, but less than 350 pounds. My master does not remember the exact number."

Does not remember... That's really some filthy rich guy. If I had that much money on me, I would definitely be counting it again and again... Klein was filled with envy.

Old Neil nodded and handed the wallet back.

“With the Goddess as proof, this belongs to you.”

The middle-aged man took the wallet over and did an estimate before pulling out three ten-pound notes.

“My master is Sir Deweyville. He wishes to commend your morals. This is what an honest person should receive. Please do not reject it.”

Sir Deweyville? The one who established the Deweyville Trust? The Sir Deweyville who provided cheap rental apartments to the working class? Klein immediately remembered the name.

He was a knight that his brother respected but did not believe was grounded in reality.

“Thank you, Sir Deweyville. He is a kind and generous gentleman.” Old Neil did not stand on ceremony as he received the three notes.

After watching Sir Deweyville’s carriage depart, he turned to look at Klein when he saw that there was no one around. He flicked the notes and chuckled.

“Thirty pounds. The IOU is settled.

“I said it will be settled in a reasonable manner.

“This is the power of magic.”

...*Holy f**king power of magic! That actually works!?* Klein was once again flabbergasted.

A few minutes later, he entered the building’s stairwell and while heading to the security company, he asked puzzledly, “Mr. Neil, why didn’t you ask for more money?”

“Do not be greedy. One must take care not to be greedy when doing ritualistic magic. Temperance is a critical trait needed by every Mystery Pryer if they wish to live long,” explained Old Neil happily.

...

In a huge ballroom, candles were burning on a few chandeliers, emitting a fragrance that soothed the minds of people. By the sheer number of candles, they produced a light in no way inferior to that of gas lamps.

There were long tables with pan-fried foie gras, grilled steak, roasted chicken, fried tonguefish, Desi oysters, mutton stew, cream soup, and other delicacies. In addition, there were bottles of Mist Champagne, Aurmir grape wine, and Southville red wine. They were all glistening with a tempting glow under the light.

Servants in red vests carried trays with crystal cups and shuttled between the gentlemen and ladies dressed both elegantly or gorgeously.

Audrey Hall was wearing a collared, high-waisted, pale-white dress with engageantes. Her corset was tightly fitted, while her voluminous layers were puffed up perfectly with a cage crinoline.

Her long blond hair was coiled up in an elegant bun and the earrings, necklace, and rings she wore sparkled brightly. At her feet were a pair of white dancing shoes that were stitched with roses and diamonds.

How many petticoats am I even wearing? Five? Six? Wearing white-silk gloves, Audrey caressed her crinoline gently with her right hand.

Her left hand was holding a glass of clear champagne.

Audrey was nothing like her usual self, usually placing herself center-stage of banquets and making her the focus of attention. Instead, she avoided the bustle and quietly stood in the shadows of hanging curtains by the French windows.

She took a sip of champagne as she watched the crowd as though she did not belong.

Earl Wolf's youngest son is chatting with Viscount Conrad's daughter. He likes to move his forearm to reinforce what he says. Hmm, the bigger the movement of his forearm, the more unbelievable his words. That is something gleaned from experience... He can't stop trying to elevate himself by putting other people down. However, he can't help but feel guilty. It can be seen by the way he talks and his body language...

Duchess Della has repeatedly covered her mouth while laughing with her left hand today. Ah, I see. She is showing off her pure ocean-blue sapphire...

Her husband, Duke Negan, is discussing the current situation with a few Conservative nobles. Since the banquet began, he has searched for Duchess Della once...

They almost never make eye contact. Maybe they aren't as in love as they pretend to be...

Baron Larry has made Madam Parnes laugh seven times. That's very normal, nothing strange about it, but why does she look at her husband with guilty eyes? Oh, they have gone their separate ways... That's not right, the directions they are headed leads to the garden...

...

In the extravagant banquet, Audrey saw many details she never noticed in the past.

There was an instant where she nearly believed that she was watching an opera.

Everyone is a good opera actor... She sighed silently as her eyes remained limpid.

At that moment, she suddenly sensed something and turned her head. She cast her gaze onto a dark corner in the large balcony outside.

In the shadows was a huge golden retriever sitting there silently. She was looking inside at Audrey while half her body was hidden in the darkness.

Susie... The corners of Audrey's mouth twitched as her expression instantly changed. She could no longer maintain her state as a Spectator.

CHAPTER 53: LISTENER

An ancient three-masted sailboat was navigating through a tumultuous storm in the sea.

It was not fast and its displacement was lacking. With the weather and the sea looking like a cataclysmic scene, the sailboat was like a withered leaf separated from its tree. However, regardless of how the typhoons rampaged or how terrifying the waves were, it continued sailing peacefully without any signs of tilting.

Alger Wilson stood on the empty deck as he looked at the massive waves that resembled mountains. His thoughts were a mystery.

It's going to be Monday again... he muttered silently to himself.

It was the day belonging to Earth Mother, the beginning of a series of waxing and waning.

However, it meant something different to Alger. It belonged to a mysterious existence forever enveloped in grayish-white fog.

At least I haven't been reduced to a madman... He stopped looking around as he gave a self-deprecating chuckle.

At this moment, one of the only few sailors he had leaned over and asked reverently, "My Lord, where are we setting course for this time?"

Alger surveyed his surroundings and said in a calm voice, "Pursue the Listener from the Aurora Order."

...

The storm subsided as mist emanated. On a strange sailboat with cannons on board, an eight or nine-year-old boy with soft yellow hair was looking at pirates around him in fear. They were disorderly—some enjoyed barrels of beer, some swung around with ropes, others mocked each other, and some even fought with their fists.

He turned to look at a black-robed man standing in the shadows. He suppressed his voice and asked, "Father, where are we going?"

Five days ago was his first time seeing his father, a father who proclaimed to be an adventurer.

If not for the oil painting his late mother left him that confirmed his father's identity and the fact that the orphanage had opened its doors to him, he was absolutely unwilling to leave his hometown and follow his only kin who was also nearly a stranger.

The man in the shadows lowered his head and looked at his son. With an amiable expression, he answered, "Jack, I'm bringing you to a holy place, a holy residence where the Creator once lived."

"Is that the Kingdom of God? We mortals can only enter by winning His grace..." Jack had been well-educated by his mother and knew this much. He was both surprised and fearful about the matter.

Standing in the shadows, the man had an unforgettable jawline as though he was a sculpture chiseled by the best artisan.

He placed his hand to his ear and made a listening pose. He replied in a tone that sounded like sleep-talking, "Jack, mortals are a wrong concept. The Creator created this world and He is everywhere. He exists in every living being. Therefore, all beings have godhood. Once the godhood attains a particular level, they can become an angel. The seven fake gods at present are only powerful angels.

"Look, I can now hear the teachings of the Creator. Ah, how extraordinary is this revelation! Life is only a tour of the spirit. When the spirit is sufficiently potent and resilient, we can find our godhood and fuse with even more godhoods..."

Jack could not understand the complicated description. He shook his head and asked another question he previously did not have the chance to.

“Father, I heard from Mother than after the Creator created this world, He split into all beings and does not exist in actuality. Then, why does His holy residence exist?”

As a seven to eight-year-old child, he was logical.

The man with the chiseled face was taken aback. He turned his head away as though he was listening to more murmurings.

Suddenly, he slumped down, knees on the deck. His exposed skin protruded black shards.

He clenched his head with both hands as his expression warped and he shouted in extreme pain, “They are lying!”

...

After lunch, having had Old Neil promise him that he would bring him to the underground market the next time he went, Klein slowly returned to the Blackthorn Security Company. He chose the two options of reading the documents in the staff office and practicing his abilities or take the opportunity to go out and act as a Seer in the Divination Club before Captain Dunn stopped him.

However, before he could make the decision, he saw Dunn Smith walk in. He was dressed in the usual black trench coat and halved top hat.

“Captain, any updates?” Klein thought of the whereabouts of the Antigonus family’s notebook as he asked with concern.

Without showing any signs of fatigue in his gray eyes, Dunn said, “The facts have corroborated that the Antigonus family’s notebook is in Ray Bieber’s hands. However, he has vanished completely.

“I have already informed the various Nighthawks teams of this matter through a telegram. They were requested to pay attention to the various piers and steam locomotive stations. The first batch of printed portraits was mailed out yesterday afternoon and will be printed in various major newspapers.”

How nice it would be if there were phones, fax machines, surveillance cameras, and big data... What a pity. I know how to use all of them and even understand a little of the logic behind it...

Klein exhaled silently.

“But regardless, we can consider ourselves as having found the notebook. And this is all thanks to you. Of course, it still needs another round of confirmations. I have already sent a telegram to the Backlund diocese, requesting them to escort Sealed Artifact 2-049 here. It was once a dangerous item of the Antigonus family. It can help us know if Ray Bieber is a descendant of the Antigonus family.”

A Grade 2 Sealed Artifact... Dangerous... They can be used with care and moderation. Klein had originally wanted to ask about the Sealed Artifact, its special abilities, and the danger it posed out of curiosity, but he instantly recalled that he lacked the necessary clearance. He had no choice but to give up.

“May Goddess bless us.” Klein tapped four spots on his chest, forming the sign of the full moon.

Dunn pushed open the door to his office and said with a slight nod, “The Goddess has always been protecting us. Klein, if you had not chosen Seer, you would be a formal member after this matter is verified. You could have chosen Sleepless, but pity... To be frank, I’m still puzzled over your choice. Although Corpse Collector is quite off-putting, you have seen Daly as well. You should know that Spirit Mediums vary in strength. As for Mystery Pryers, they’re a good choice too. At the very least, you have Old Neil as a role model, so he will make sure the risk of losing control is minimized.”

With regards to this question, Klein had prepared an answer from the beginning. He just never had a chance to use it since Dunn did not ask. He was only able to answer in passing.

He organized his words and said, “My considerations stem from the fact that Seers and Mystery Pryers are considered Beyonders with a support role. They do not need to always face enemies for that’s too

dangerous. And both you and Old Neil said that in the domain of mystery and Beyonders, curiosity and experimentation usually brings about terrifying outcomes. Describing Mystery Pryers as prying mysteries made me worried, so... Heh, as you know, I was only an ordinary graduate not long ago. A lack of guts is the only reason I made such a choice."

"I have to say that this is a very reasonable answer that goes beyond my expectations." Dunn massaged his temples and chuckled.

He turned halfway as his gray eyes sized up Klein.

"Continue going out for now. Do not limit yourself to the paths leading from Welch's place to Iron Cross Street. Perhaps you might sense the notebook and help us confirm Ray Bieber's location."

"Alright." Klein realized that he no longer need to be in a dilemma.

He bade Dunn farewell and turned around, his heart beginning to count.

Three, two...

"Hold on," shouted Dunn.

Klein turned his head and smiled.

"Captain, is there anything else?"

Dunn coughed slightly and said, "Well, support Beyonders have to fight their enemies from time to time. Although Seers sound like they can avoid such battles, they are not to be ignored. You have to maintain your shooting skills and work on increasing your strength."

"This is what I'm working hard towards." Klein pointed outside. "I'll be leaving."

"Alright. Uh, wait a moment." Dunn shouted for him once more. As he pondered, he said, "Perhaps I have to consider hiring a combat trainer for you. Of course, this matter is under the premise that you become a formal member."

Klein responded tersely before asking carefully, "Captain, is there anything else?"

"No." Seeing Klein's unbelieving eyes, Dunn shook his head and smiled. He emphasized again, "Really, nothing."

Only then did Klein walk past the partition divider. He bade farewell to Rozanne and Mrs. Orianna and headed to the

Shooting Club for practice.

With all of this done, he went to the Divination Club and saw the beautiful Angelica sitting there reading magazines leisurely.

"Home"... Klein silently read. With the cane in hand, he walked over and greeted with a smile,

"Good afternoon, Madam Angelica."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti." In no rush, Angelica put down her magazine. She stood up and said, "Not long after you left yesterday, Mr. Glacis came. He just recovered from a major

illness."

Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he smiled.

"That sure is something worth celebrating."

Upon hearing this, Angelica, who was secretly observing him, lowered her voice and asked out of curiosity,

"Mr. Glacis said that you are a very, very, very magical doctor. Are you?"

What? Klein looked at the lady in front of him, suspecting if he was hearing things.

What made him think I'm a doctor?

Even I do not know...

Upon seeing Klein's odd expression, Angelica immediately felt her beliefs waver.

"Is that so? Mr. Glacis mentioned that you were able to tell of an ailment in his lungs simply from observation..." Her voice softened until she finally shut up.

Observation? A dark glabella? Klein was instantly enlightened as he shook his head with a chortle.

"I believe Mr. Glacis was mistaken."

He was planning on being perfunctory, but after recalling that no one sought his divination services the entire afternoon yesterday, his mind whirled. It affected his goal of acting as a Seer, so he explained, "It's actually a form of divination."

"Divination? But Mr. Glacis only mentioned that you observed his face. That's also considered divination?" asked Angelica in shock and doubt.

Klein smiled, composed.

"As a member of the Divination Club, you should know about palm-reading, right?"

Palm-reading was not patented by the Foodaholic Empire. Even on Earth, India and old Europe had developed similar principles, much less in a world with Beyonder powers.

"I know about it, but it seems you did not read his palm? Were you observing him in secret?" asked Angelica curiously.

"I was using face-reading." Klein cooked up a lie. "Its principles aren't very different from palm-reading at a fundamental level." "Really?" Angelica's eyes were filled with disbelief.

In order to develop his career as a Seer, Klein chuckled. He pretended to be in thought as he tapped his glabella twice.

He focused his eyes and Angelica's aura presented itself. Her head was purple, her limbs were red, her throat was blue... There was no problems with her health except for some colors being duller. However, that was a manifestation of ordinary fatigue.

Klein then looked at her emotions and saw orange mixed in with some red and blue. It also meant warmth coupled with some excitement and thought.

Thankfully... After realizing that there was nothing abnormal about her, Klein planned on deactivating his Spirit Vision. But it was at that moment when he suddenly saw rich darkness hidden in the depths of her emotional colors.

Furthermore, she is lacking a little of white—an eagerness to improve... Klein nodded while in thought.

"Mr. Moretti, were you reading my face?" Seeing the young gentleman in black in front of her turn silent abruptly while seriously sizing her up, Angelica keenly noticed something. She asked in a half-curious and half-worried manner.

Klein did not immediately reply. Instead, he tapped his glabella lightly as he wore a look of scrutiny.

Just as Angelica was feeling unease, he said warmly, "Madam Angelica, there are some sorrows and pains which you should not seal in your heart."

Angelica's eyes widened as her mouth turned agape. However, she did not say a word.

She looked at Klein in his halved top hat with an apparent scholarly bearing. She heard him use a deep, comforting and warm voice to say, “You need to either go mountain climbing, a game of tennis, or perform a tragic play to exhaust your body due to exercising. Let your tears flow down uninhibited, then cry and scream. Express all those emotions.

“That will be very helpful to your health.”

The moment those words entered her ears, Angelica felt like she had transformed into a statue. She stood there motionless.

She tried hard to blink as she lowered her head in a fluster, saying deeply, “Thank you for your suggestion...”

“It seems like there are many members here today?” Klein did not continue. As though he had not done any divinations prior, he turned to his side and looked to the meeting room at the end of the corridor.

“Sunday afternoon... at least fifty members...” Angelica’s voice sounded a little hoarse. She only mentioned the key terms.

She paused as her vocal pace gradually returned to normal.

“Do you want tea or coffee?”

“Sibe black tea.” Klein nodded slightly. He politely took off his hat and slowly walked to the meeting room.

Only when he vanished behind the door did Angelica exhale slowly.

...

The Divination Club’s meeting room was very large. It was nearly twice the size of Klein’s high school classroom.

In the past, only five or six members would be present, making it look extremely empty. Now, there were dozens of fortune-tellers sitting in different spots. They filled up most of the room.

Sunlight shone into the room through the few oriel windows. The members were either discussing softly among themselves or asking Hanass Vincent questions. Otherwise, they were practicing and attempting divination or drinking coffee and reading newspapers by themselves.

Such a scene made Klein feel like he was back to his schooling days on Earth. The difference was that it was noisier and more rowdy back then, without the tranquility of the meeting room.

He looked around, but he didn’t see familiar faces like Glacis or Edward Steve. So, he casually picked up a divination textbook, found a corner, and started flipping through it leisurely.

Very soon, Angelica came in with a cup of tea and left it on the table before Klein.

As she was leaving quietly, she suddenly saw Mr. Moretti take out an exquisite-looking silver chain from his left sleeve. There was a chunk of pure topaz hanging on the silver chain.

What is he doing? Angelica slowed down subconsciously and focused her gaze at Klein.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand and allowed the topaz to hang above the Sibe black tea, just short of touching the surface of the liquid.

With a serene expression, he half-closed his eyes and the atmosphere around him suddenly turned quiet.

The topaz started moving slightly, along with the special looking silver chain, in a clockwise direction.

Upon seeing this, Angelica found Mr. Moretti extremely mysterious.

“The black tea you provide is great,” Klein said softly after he opened his eyes with a smile.

His actions were intentionally done for Angelica to see!

If he wanted people to select him for his divination services, Angelica's recommendation was a very crucial factor!

Since he wanted to act as a Seer, Klein no longer had any reservations. He completely personified the identity.

"Yes, Mr. Vannas is very picky about the quality of tea," Angelica said, stunned.

Klein put away his spirit pendulum by winding it properly. Then, he raised the white porcelain cup with floral design. With a smile, he gestured politely at her with his cup.

...

Angelica returned to the reception hall, but she no longer had the mood to read magazines. She sat there, gazing into the distance. It was a wonder what she was thinking about.

This continued until there were knocks on the door. She jolted awake and hurriedly looked at the entrance, only to see a lady dressed in a light-blue dress.

The lady took off her veiled hat with a powder blue ribbon. She looked calm and melancholic.

"Good afternoon, esteemed lady. Would you like to join the Divination Club, or are you looking for a divination?" Angelica asked like clockwork.

"I want a divination." The lady had a beautiful pair of eyes hidden with sorrow, and she bit her lower lip as she spoke.

Angelica guided her to the sofa and explained to her how the Divination Club worked in detail.

She picked up an album and handed it over.

"You can pick anyone."

In her low spirits, the lady flipped through the album seriously. As there were too many club members there that day, there were too many choices. It left her quite upset.

"Can you recommend one? From these few pages." She pointed at the middle section of the album, omitting the fortune-tellers priced above two soli and those below four pence.

Angelica took the album and looked at it for a few minutes. She deliberated her words before saying, "I suggest this gentleman."

The lady who looked uneasy took a glance and realized that it was a fortune-teller named "Klein Moretti."

"Mr. Moretti just joined the club... Is his divination reliable?" she asked worriedly.

Angelica nodded with great affirmation.

"Another member of the club and I are certain that Mr. Moretti is an outstanding fortune-teller. If it wasn't for his just joining the club, he wouldn't take such low fees."

"I understand." The depressed girl nodded. "I'll pick Mr. Moretti for a divination then."

"Alright, please hold on for a second." Angelica took the album and walked towards the meeting room.

She came next to Klein and said with a suppressed voice, "Mr. Moretti, someone wants you to divine for them. Which room would you like to use?"

That was effective. My first "business" is here. Klein put down his teacup and nodded calmly as he said, "Topaz room."

"Alright." Angelica walked slowly ahead of him and led him to Topaz room before opening its wooden door.

Klein sat behind the table that had various divination tools on it. He waited less than a minute before he saw a woman in a lightblue dress walk in. She looked down and melancholic.

Seizing the opportunity when she was closing the door, he tapped his glabella twice.

The yellow color in her stomach seems a little dull... The dark color of her emotions is very heavy, mainly worry and anxiety. Klein looked her over carefully and leaned backwards. He then lifted his hand to cut off his Spiritual Vision.

“Good day, Mr. Moretti.” The woman in the light-blue dress sat down.

“Good afternoon, how may I address you?” Klein asked politely, not carrying much hope of getting an answer.

As a keyboard warrior, he knew that many people were not willing to use their real names during divination.

“You can call me Anna.” The girl put her veiled cap aside. She looked at Klein with mixed anticipation and doubt, and said, “I would like to divine about my fiancé’s situation. He traveled to the Southern Continent in March for a business deal. He sent me and his family a telegram last month on the third, saying that he was going to set sail and return. But he did not return after twenty days. At first, I believed that his delay was due to the Berserk Sea’s weather, but as of today, it has been more than a month. The ship he took, the Alfalfa, still hasn’t arrived at Enmat Harbor.”

The ocean that separated the Northern and Southern continent was called the Berserk Sea. It was well known for natural calamities and its countless dangerous currents. If it was not for Emperor Roselle, who sent men to discover a few safer sailing routes, countries in the Northern Continent would still have yet to enter the age of colonization, let alone lay an underwater cable to complete a transoceanic telegraph.

Klein looked at his very first client of his career as a Seer and asked carefully, “Which divination method do you wish to use?”

Anna, with her beautiful eyes, hesitated for more than ten seconds.

"You can choose any type that you believe will be accurate. You are the fortune-teller, while I'm not. Of course, apart from cards, including tarot, I have also attempted studying them at home. I always felt they were more like toys or a game."

Klein thought for a moment, his wrists leaning on the edge of the table. He steepled his hands before his face, his gaze peaceful. He said softly, "Then we shall use the astrolabe."

He pointed to a fountain pen and stack of white paper on the table and said, "Write down the name of your fiancé as well as his facial features, address, and date of birth. It would be even better if you can remember the specific time he was born."

From her clothes, makeup, and demeanor, Klein did not believe that she was illiterate.

Anna did not reply. She extended her hand and took a piece of paper. She lifted the pen and dipped it in some ink. She started writing, pausing occasionally to think.

Two minutes later, she pushed the paper toward Klein.

Klein received it and turned it around. The information on the paper read: "Joyce Meyer, 15th September 1323, 2:00PM. Tingen City, East Borough, 8 Stevens Street. Short blond hair, aquiline nose..."

With just a short glance, Klein quickly calculated the person's spiritual number:

1+5=6

In the study of Spirit Numerology in mysticism, adding the numbers of the day the person was born was called their Birth Day Path Number, affecting the person's life before 27. Birth Month Path Number (calculated by adding the numbers in their birth month) affected their life from 27 to 54 years old, while the Birth Year Path Number (calculating the numbers in their birth year) affected their life from 54 years old onward.

It was July 1349, so Joyce was not yet 27; thus, Klein immediately calculated the Birth Day Path Number.

The number six represented a balanced and harmonious life, with a heart for giving and a decent marriage or engagement.

Following this, he quickly calculated Joyce's Year Path Number.

The so-called Year Path Number was calculated by replacing the birth year with the current year. The digits were then added with his Birth Day Path Number and Birth Month Path Number to get a general understanding of the person's luck for the year.

1+3+4+9=17, 1+7=8; 8+9 (Birth Month Path Number)+6 (Birth Day Path Number)=23; 2+3=5; His Year Path Number is 5, signifying that he would meet with change and accident. He would be required to take certain risks... Klein made a silent judgment after consolidating the facts. He confirmed that the information Anna gave was correct.

He retracted his gaze from the paper and turned it toward Anna, "Mr. Meyer set off on his journey on the 3rd of June?"

"If he did not lie, that is indeed the case." Anna bit her lips.

"Alright." Klein took the fountain pen and made a note of that.

He looked at Anna with his dark brown eyes and said gently, "I will begin creating the astrolabe now. I will need some time and absolute silence; do you mind waiting outside? Angelica will provide you with a cup of tea or coffee."

“Alright.” Anna knew that some fortune-tellers had their eccentricities, so she stood up unsurprised. She took her hat with the light blue ribbon and left the Topaz room.

Klein locked the door and returned to the table. He followed the information and set up the astrolabe, including elements such as his horoscope and locations of the corresponding planets and stars.

Throughout the entire process, he did not open the Astromancy Manual. He completed the set up based on his memory.

Over the past few days of his mysticism studies, Klein realized that he could easily grasp and understand anything about divination, quickly turning it into instinct.

Perhaps that is the ability of a Seer... He completed the astrolabe and felt satisfied. He felt as though his body, heart, and soul had relaxed considerably.

As he looked at the outcome, he followed the path of the horoscopes and planets, as well as other supporting details to roughly deduce that Joyce Meyer had met with an accident but would ultimately survive it.

At this point, the divination was technically complete. But Klein wanted to pay much attention to his first business transaction. He hoped to build a reputation to aid in acquiring future jobs. He picked up the pen and wrote a sentence in Hermes: Joyce Meyer’s current situation.

He read the sentence silently and memorized the information on the piece of paper, repeating it again and again.

After seven times, Klein grabbed the piece of paper and leaned back into his chair.

He imagined the sphere of light, and his eyes became darker, allowing him to quickly enter a state of Cogitation.

The surroundings took on an ethereal quality. A formless, boundless fog stretched above him.

Klein recalled the contents of the piece of paper, then relaxed. He fell into a deep sleep in this state.

He was using a dream divination technique!

Repeating the question, remembering the details, and then allowing his Astral Projection to roam the spirit world in a dream would allow him to gain revelations!

Ordinary people also had this sort of experience sometimes, but it was hard for them to recall, as the signs in their dreams were more complicated and garbled. A Seer would not have such a problem, for they could see the images directly.

The surroundings began to turn hazy as Klein turned half asleep.

In the contorted fantasy, he saw a blond young man with an aquiline nose. He was swimming frantically in a sea of blood, nearly engulfed by the waves. But in the end, he managed to escape to shore.

The image shattered and changed. Klein saw a blue house with a toy windmill at the door. That blond young man was entering the house slowly, seemingly in joy.

At this moment, the image changed once again. Klein realized that he was inside a magnificent palace.

The walls were destroyed and damaged beyond repair. Moss and weeds grew in multiple areas. Through the holes in the walls, he could see a mountain peak and clouds clinging close to it outside.

Atop the palace was a huge throne carved out of stone. It was adorned with dull gemstones and gold. It looked as though it was not prepared for a human.

This giant throne was empty and mottled, as if it had been washed over by the ages.

Klein looked around in confusion. He did not understand why he would be dreaming of such a scene.

His turbid mind turned sharp as he subconsciously walked out of the palace in an attempt to ascertain where he was.

Suddenly, he felt a gaze fall upon him. It was a gaze that came from behind!

Klein suddenly turned around and stared towards the giant stone throne, only to see a scene of countless transparent maggots slowly twitching and growing.

Klein gasped.

He opened his eyes and woke up from his dream.

Crystal balls, tarot cards, and the prepared astrolabe entered his vision. Reality quickly replaced fantasy.

The initial dream was the result of the divination, but what was the later dream about? It seemed to be targeted at me? Klein put the piece of paper down. He rubbed his temples and contemplated.

He could confirm that it wasn't his fear projecting itself in the form of a dream, for he was doing the divination himself.

A palace not meant for humans on the peak of a mountain... The silent stare... The contorted and weird scene of the maggots... Klein silently guessed as he recalled.

Has the luck enhancement ritual communicated with that existence? Or is it a result of the Antigonus family's notebook... Right, that notebook mentioned the Nation of the Evernight in the Hornacis mountain range! The palace in the dream was on a mountain peak!

He made a simple deduction and was relieved that he had picked Seer. According to Old Neil, Mystery Pryers could also divine through dreams, but they weren't as effective as a Seer.

Sigh, it sure isn't letting me go... All I can hope for is the early capture of Ray Bieber... Klein collected himself and picked up the piece of paper with the diagram of the astrolabe. He slowly walked towards the door.

He opened the door and headed to the reception area. He saw Anna looking out the window, completely ignoring her cup of black tea.

"Ah, Mr. Moretti, is there a result?" She saw Klein in her peripheral vision and stood up in a hurry.

Klein did not answer her immediately. Instead, he asked according to the revelation he received from the dream, "Does your house, or Mr. Meyer's house, have a toy windmill?" Anna's eyes widened, shocked into silence.

After a while, she muttered, "That was a present he gave me. It is by the door at my house. How did you know that..." *C-can this be divined?*

Klein smiled and spoke with a gentle tone, "Congratulations Miss Anna, Mr. Joyce Meyer is currently a guest at your place. If you rush back, you should still be able to meet him. He just experienced a calamity, an unimaginably painful journey. What he needs now are not questions, but consolation and a warm hug."

"Really?" Anna asked in disbelief.

The fortune-tellers she knew would never speak with such certainty or give such firm conclusions.

"You will know if you go back immediately," Klein replied with a gentle tone and smile.

"Oh, Lord of Steam, is that true? Has my poor Joyce returned? Are you certain? No, I cannot believe it..." Anna froze for a moment and said a few delirious words.

She took out a one-soli note from her purse and did not wait for Klein to give her the change. She broke into a small jog as she left the Divination Club, taking a carriage back home.

“Does this include my tip?” Klein looked at the note and shook his head with a laugh.

...

A two-wheeled carriage steered quickly across the streets and entered East Borough.

Anna watched the streets sweeping past her, feeling a mixture of unease, anticipation, and fear. It did not take long before the toy windmill entered her field of vision.

She got off the carriage, showing no care for her bearing. She staggered quickly towards the door and rang the doorbell.

The door creaked open, revealing a blond young man dressed in a black formal suit. He was haggard, but his eyes carried a glint of joy. He had an aquiline nose.

“I thought that I would miss you today,” Joyce said with a smile.

“...Oh, Exalted Steam, you really are back!” Anna rubbed her eyes, exclaiming in pleasant surprise.

What the fortune-teller said was true!

No, that was a real seer!

It was simply fascinating!

Thoughts welled in her mind as Anna pounced forward with tears in her eyes and gave her fiancé a warm hug.

The two of them hugged silently outside the grayish-blue house. The toy windmill turned slowly, seemingly tossing all their difficulties far away.

CHAPTER 56: ESCAPE FROM THE SEA

In a rather spacious living room, Anna and Joyce were seated on different sofas, separated by Anna's parents.

Joyce sighed with a satisfied expression and said, "Exalted Steam, I am so lucky to come back alive, to be able to see Anna again."

"My poor Joyce, what happened?" Anna couldn't help but ask with concern.

Joyce took a glance at his fiancée, and his expression turned grave.

"I still feel terrified to this day. I keep waking up from my dreams again and again. Five days after the Alfalfa left Caesar Pier, we came across pirates, scary pirates. The only fortunate thing was that their leader's name was Nast."

"The pirate that calls himself the King of the Five Seas?" Anna's father, Mr. Wayne, asked in shock.

Although Joyce had already been there for half an hour, he did not volunteer details about his ordeal. He appeared to be fearful, perturbed, and uneasy. It was only after Anna returned and hugged him that he finally appeared to put it behind him.

"Yes, due to his declaration of being a descendant of the Solomon Empire, the King of the Five Seas, Nast didn't believe in killing captives. Hence, we were only robbed and didn't lose our lives. His subordinates even left us sufficient food," Joyce said as he recalled the ordeal.

His body started to quiver, but he continued to describe his deepest and scariest nightmare.

"I didn't lose much of my wealth. I believed that my misfortune was over, but as we continued towards our destination, a heated conflict erupted among the Alfalfa's passengers and crew. From disagreement, to fighting, to drawing revolvers, and raising swords to kill each other... I saw nothing but blood during that period. One after another, people beside me fell with eyes opened, never to be closed. Their limbs, hearts, and intestines were scattered across the floors."

"Those of us who were unwilling to turn into savage beasts, the rational group, had nowhere to hide and nowhere to escape. We were surrounded by deep blue waves and the boundless ocean... Some wailed, some begged for mercy, some sold their bodies, but their heads were hung from the mast either way.

"Anna, I reeled in despair back then. I thought I would never see you again. Fortunately, in such a nightmare, there was still a hero. The captain took us to hide in the sturdy keel of the ship, and we relied on the stored water and food there until the maniacs reached their limits. Mr. Tris encouraged us, courageously leading us in an assault against those murderers...

"After an unforgettable bloody battle, we survived. But the Alfalfa strayed off course, and only a third of the original sailors remained."

...

When he depicted the most horrible and darkest side of the human psyche, Joyce couldn't help but recall the "hero," the man that called himself Tris. He had a round and amiable face. He was shy like a girl and enjoyed staying in a corner. Only people whom he was familiar with knew that he was a very good conversationalist.

But it was such an unremarkable boy who stood in front of everyone with determination in the worst of days.

"Oh, Exalted Steam, my poor Joyce, you went through such a heartbreaking ordeal. Thank God, praise be to God, He prevented us from eternal separation." Tears welled up in Anna's eyes as she constantly dotted three points to form a triangle, the Sacred Emblem for Steam and Machinery.

Joyce revealed a faint pale smile.

“This is the reward for our faith. The Alfalfa then went through storms, lost its course, and after surmounting one challenge after another, arrived at Enmat Harbor.”

“Due to the bloodbath that had taken place on the boat, those of us that survived were held captive by the police and questioned separately. We didn’t have a chance to send telegrams home to update our loved ones. When they released us this morning, I immediately borrowed some money from my friend and took the steam locomotive back. Thank God for letting me set foot on the land of Tingen again, allowing me to see all of you again.” Then, he looked towards his fiancée in confusion.

“Anna, when you saw me, I could feel your happiness and surprise, but I couldn’t understand why you rushed towards the door so excitedly right after you got off the carriage. Heh, I had planned on giving you a huge surprise.”

Anna thought about what had happened earlier, and continued in disbelief, “There’s nothing to hide, Joyce. As I was worried about you, I went to the only divination club in Tingen City today for a divination. That fortune-teller—no, the seer told me, he said, ‘Your fiancé has returned; he’s in the house with a windmill.’”

“What?” the Wayne couple and Joyce exclaimed simultaneously.

Anna covered her face and shook her head.

“I can barely believe it either, but it happened. Exalted Steam, perhaps there really are miracles in this world.”

“Joyce, that seer asked me for your name, characteristics, address, and birth date. He told me he was going to do an astrolabe divination. Then, he asked me if the house with a toy windmill was yours or mine. When I confirmed it was mine, he said, ‘Congratulations Miss Anna, Mr. Joyce Meyer is currently a guest at your place. What he needs now are not questions, but consolation and a warm hug.’”

“God...” Joyce found it unbelievable and incomprehensible. “Does he know me? Did someone send him a telegram? Could it be that he is familiar with the police in Enmat Harbor? No, that doesn’t explain it. How did he know that I came to your place? How could he possibly know that you would seek a divination? Did you make an appointment?”

“No, I made a selection at the last minute,” Anna replied with a vacant-looking expression.

“Perhaps a good seer needs to be in control of vast amounts of information, even if it cannot be used any time soon. Perhaps, that is the fascinating aspect of divination.” Anna’s father, Mr.

Wayne sighed and concluded. “In the known history of more than a thousand years and in the uncertain Fourth Epoch, divination has existed and has yet to disappear. I think there must be a reason for that.”

Joyce shook his head lightly and asked, “What’s that seer’s name?”

Anna thought and said, “Klein Moretti.”

...

In the reception lobby of the Divination Club.

As Klein had spoken softly, Angelica knew not to go close. Therefore, she only saw Anna leave as though she had lost her soul, wearing shock and confusion on her face.

Angelica briskly walked to the sofa and asked out of curiosity, “Was the result good?”

She did not dare ask the actual result, afraid of violating the unspoken rule of fortune-tellers.

“Yeah.” Klein nodded and took out three copper coins from his pocket. “One-eighth of one soli is one and a half pennies, right?”

"Yes." Angelica looked at the copper coins and realized that one of them was a penny and two of them were halfpence. She quickly held it out and said, "There's an additional halfpence." Klein smiled faintly and said, "Thank you for taking care of my customer. She gave me a tip, so it's only right I give you one."

It's also to thank you for recommending me... he added in his heart.

"Alright." Angelica felt an unknown fear of Klein, but since the reason was appropriate, she didn't refuse the offer.

Klein returned to the meeting room, believing that there would be more people requesting his divinations.

However, he did not receive a second customer by forty minutes past five.

It wasn't because the Divination Club's business was poor, but because most people had already chosen a fortune-teller.

They likely were recommended by others and had long determined whose services to hire... In short, I'm still lacking in reputation... Klein laughed at himself for using game terminology.

He finished his third cup of Sibe black tea, grabbed his top hat and silver-edged cane, and walked leisurely out of the meeting room.

Angelica suddenly recalled Glacis's instructions, and she quickly moved to intercept him.

"Mr. Moretti, when will you next visit the club? Mr. Glacis would like to thank you in person."

"I will come over whenever I'm free. If fate permits us, he will definitely meet me," Klein replied, using the tone of a psychic charlatan, as though he was in character.

Then, he left the club before Angelica could respond and took the public carriage home.

When he stepped through the door, Klein found Benson reading the newspaper and Melissa putting together bits and pieces of gears, bearings, and springs in the evening sunlight.

"Good afternoon. Did Mrs. Shaud visit?" Klein asked casually.

Benson didn't put down his newspaper; instead, he lifted his head.

"Mrs. Shaud's visit lasted fifteen minutes. She brought some gifts, and she was very happy with the muffins and lemon cake that we prepared. She also invited us over whenever we have the chance to. She is a friendly, well-mannered lady. She knows how to carry a conversation very well too."

"The only problem is their belief in the Lord of Storms. They believe that girls shouldn't go to school, but should be homeschooled instead," Melissa complained.

It was obvious that she was very upset about it.

"Don't mind that. As long as she doesn't disturb us, she will still be a good neighbor," Klein comforted his sister, smiling.

The Loen Kingdom was a multi-religious nation, unlike the Frosac Empire in the north which only believed in the God of Combat or the Feynapotter Kingdom in the south which only worshiped Earth Mother. It was inevitable that the congregations from the three major churches of the Lord of Storms, the Evernight Goddess, and the God of Steam and Machinery had conflicts in beliefs and customs. After a thousand years of this, they restrained each other, making coexistence possible.

"Okay." Melissa pursed her lips and redirected her focus onto the pile of parts again.

After dinner, Klein continued revising history. Only when Melissa and Benson showered and returned to their rooms did he wash up, enter his bedroom, and lock his door.

He needed to organize and summarize what he had learned and the problems that he encountered to prevent himself from forgetting or missing out any critical points. Only by doing so would he be able to respond to subsequent developments in the future with a clear train of thought.

Klein flipped open his notebook, took out his pen, and started writing in Mandarin.

“Why is the key to digesting potions acting?”

After pausing for a moment, Klein continued writing.

“The essence to resolving the problems with potions is through digestion, not simply controlling it. This can be understood in a straightforward manner.

“Merely controlling it would be akin to using the power of potions as an external tool. A tamed beast no matter how well controlled would ultimately not be a part of a person. The risk of it turning on them would be ever present. As for digestion, it is to view the downed potion as a part of them. They can break it down, fuse with it, absorb it, and form an overall system.

“I am currently certain of this point. What is more important is how ‘acting’ helps in digestion.

“According to my experience as a Seer today, I can make two hypotheses. They can be verified in the future.”

“One: Acting based on the potion’s name changes the state of one’s body, heart, and soul, making them closer to the remnant headstrong psyche of the potion’s core. This results in resonance which allows gradual assimilation and absorption.

“Two: The remnant headstrong psyche spirit of the magic medicine might be like a computer with complete defensive mechanisms. If one wishes to attack it and break it down, they will need to find a bug, security hole, or key. The name of the potion provides a corresponding clue; thus, we can disguise our body, heart, and soul as ‘part of the system’ through acting, and so we deceive the system’s defenses. This line of thought is similar to Emperor Roselle’s description.

“No matter which guess is right, there is no escaping the body, heart, and soul, for they are the only bridge between acting and the power of potions.”

Klein put down his pen and looked at the paragraph of text. For a moment, he even wanted to thank the education he received from the Foodaholic Empire.

No matter if he chose science or engineering for his further education, he was equipped with the basics of logical thought. Otherwise, there was no way he could have become a keyboard warrior, nor would he have been able to analyze his current situation.

“Acting might have an effect, but we’ll have to wait and see for the specifics,” Klein guessed.

After that, he wrote down his second question.

“Why would a Seer, being more well-learned and professional in the domain of mysticism, be lacking in means when it comes to direct combat? Wouldn’t being more well-learned and professional make a Seer even more powerful, giving them the ability to discover a way to defeat their enemies?

“The reasons could be...

“First, just like the web novels I’ve read in the past, I have transmigrated to a game world that has become reality. Thus, different ‘jobs’ come with different specialties that have to be balanced against each other. But up to this point, there has been no sign of this world being a game, nor are there signs of mission-like developments. I’ll put this reason on hold, but it’s very unlikely.

“Second, the fundamental law of this world is balance. The Creator made this world with the core idea of balance.

“Third, potions at the same Sequence level would have the same level of power. It is the most optimal state based on what our forefathers found out and summarized. Exceeding this level of power would make it easier for one to collapse and lose control. Below this level of power would make it such that one would not obtain the desired Beyonder powers. Thus, under the situation of a balanced power level, being stronger in one area would naturally mean that one is weaker in another area.

“Fourth, everything in this world originated from the same source; they were formed by the remnants of the Creator. Thus, everything in this world is technically fragments of the Creator, and the fact that they have to complement each other would mean that there are inherent shortcomings to an individual.

“I am leaning towards the third and fourth reasons, but the latter stems from an unconfirmed myth and can only serve as a guide.

“Thus, I shall use the third reason as a guide, and try to ascertain it using my current knowledge and future studies.”

At this point, Klein had already written two full pages but did not stop. Instead, he penned a new question.

“From what I learned today, my luck enhancement ritual is categorized as a classic ritualistic magic.

“Similar kinds of ritualistic magic can be split into three parts, the first being a sacrifice that sparks the interest of a corresponding existence. The second is comprised of incantations specifically describing the existence in question. The third is using simple formatting and symbols to convey what one is asking for.

“Using this as a benchmark to analyze the luck enhancement ritual, there’s an obvious problem. “There is no third part!

“It has the sacrifice aspect in the placement of staple foods and walking a square in a counterclockwise manner with four steps. There is also a clear indication who the incantation is for, such as the phrase, ‘The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.’

“But all I did after was close my eyes and wait. There was nothing in the ritual that described the goal of enhancing my luck.

“In other words, the corresponding existence has no way of knowing what the so-called luck enhancement ritual is asking for, and can only do as they see fit... Do as they see fit...

“What a troll! Isn’t that darn ‘Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts of the Qin and Han Dynasty’ too much of a troll?

“I must have had rocks in my head back then for trying...”

Klein stopped writing and took two deep breaths, trying hard to calm himself down.

He spat out a foul breath and continued writing.

“I can consider re-designing the ritual, making it more complete. The motive of the ritual shall be to return to Earth, back to the world with my parents and friends.

“Then here comes the question: was the entity truly acting on a whim? Or is there a deeper meaning to it?

“Also, is the entity that the descriptive incantations point towards in this world the same one from Earth?

“If so, the difference in results between the first and second ritual could be explained as the entity doing as it wishes. But the results of me appearing above the gray fog during the second and third time, while being able to connect to Justice and The Hanged Man has basically no differences. Why would that be so?

“If the fourth ritual tomorrow afternoon shows me the same stable results, that would mean that the effects are consistent. That would mean that the unknown entity has an agenda I do not know about. If that is the case, adding new descriptions and requests would not get me a clear response. In fact, it might complicate the ritual and result in adverse effects.

“Would the difference between the first ritual and the subsequent rituals—under the premise that the entity I called upon is the same one—mean that the results would be different depending on the world I’m in? It is like I am using a different interface...

“Then how can I design it to obtain my desired outcome?

“If I think that the entities behind the first and subsequent rituals are different, some of the questions can be perfectly answered. But similarly, the stability of the results in the second and third rituals would mean that the entity I am praying to has a certain agenda, and there is no way I can change that for the time being.

“The most important question is the identity of the entity that the ritual is directed. Where is He, and why doesn’t He give me any clues or guidance?

“Could He be deep in the world of fog?

“Hmm, can I treat Him as an entity in slumber, an entity that would give fixed responses if I give Him a certain stimulus, but would not interfere with what I do other than that?

“Then I can introduce a different ritual as a stimulus and conclude whether the feedback I receive is regular. That way, I can find the correct method of returning.

“But the problem lies in the possibility that He is not asleep. In that case, such tests might result in terrifying outcomes. It might be really dangerous.

“The first attempt must be conducted with extreme caution. The design must not anger the being...

“What a headache. I need more knowledge.” Klein sighed and gave a summary.

Finally, he wrote down other miscellaneous items.

“There are always formless voices resonating in my ears, shouting ‘Hornacis and... uh, was it saying Frygrea or Feygrea?

“Hornacis is the mountain range dividing the Loen Kingdom and the Intis Republic. Its main peak is six thousand meters above sea level.

“According to the records in the Antigonus family’s diary, there existed a Nation of the Evernight in the Fourth Epoch. Is the Nation of the Evernight related to the Evernight Goddess—is there any connection between the two? Are they allies or enemies? Was the Antigonus family obliterated by the Church of Evernight due to Nation of the Evernight?

“Did I hear murmurings coming from the diary, from the howls of the Antigonus family over one or two thousand years?

“What then does Frygrea, uh—Flegrea mean?

“An interesting question. To be able to leave behind such a diary, to leave behind Sealed Artifact 2-049 implies that the Antigonus family had possession of a relatively powerful Beyonder power. If that is so, which Sequence did they possess? Was it complete or not complete?

“My realization that the diary is in the hands of Ray Bieber was a bit of a coincidence, but without any indication of it being arranged, could my fate really be tied up with that diary’s?”

...

His ideas were penned on the pieces of paper. Klein tried his best to write down the events he had experienced and his guesses about their meaning.

He wrote a total of four pages on both sides of each paper.

Rip! Klein suddenly tore off the four pages and read them from top to bottom, sometimes marking certain sections with his pen, adding a few sentences at other times.

Time flew quickly. The crimson moon was temporarily covered by dark clouds. Klein picked up the pocket watch on the table, snapped it open, and looked at the time.

He put down the watch and took out a box of matches from his drawer. He lit one and brought it close to the four pages of notes.

The orange flame ignited the edges of the paper and quickly spread.

Klein placed the notes on top of the wooden dustbin and watched the ashes drop.

He then released his fingers, allowing the papers to fall. In just ten seconds, everything had disappeared. All that was left was the still-swirling ash and the charred bottom of the dustbin.

As there was Emperor Roselle's secret diary in this world, Klein did not dare leave behind any evidence that he knew how to write Chinese—if Old Neil and the rest discovered the four pieces of paper he wrote, he would have no idea how to explain the matter.

And while writing the confidential questions, Klein was worried that the one paying attention to his dreams would be able to see and decipher the contents no matter which language he used, be it Loen, ancient Feysac, or Hermes. Therefore, he could only write notes in Chinese to organize and summarize. After he was done with the task, he burned the notes to leave no traces.

And precisely because there was no way of saving, he set up a plan for himself. He would do this summary once a week just in case he forgot anything.

As he watched the ashes fall, Klein pulled out a white piece of paper. He wrote the title: "To my respected mentor,"

He wanted to write to Senior Associate Professor Quentin Cohen, asking if he had any relevant historical information about the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range.

The next day, a Monday morning.

Klein, who had the day off, didn't leave home. Instead, he gave Melissa his letter directed to Mentor Cohen Quentin and more than enough money to buy stamps. He entrusted her with the job of mailing the letter at the post office near the Tingen Technical School where she studied.

After breakfast, he slept in to make up for the lack of sleep caused by the previous night's "work." He only woke up because of his stomach's grumblings close to noon.

He heated up some leftovers from the night before and ate them with a loaf of rye bread. Klein grabbed a newspaper and entered the bathroom on the second floor.

Whenever he did that, he couldn't help but sigh at the lack of a cell phone.

After about seven or eight minutes, he left the toilet refreshed and washed his hands. He then returned to his bedroom and locked his door.

Klein drew the curtains, lit up the gas lamp, and cogitated for half an hour. After practicing his Spiritual Vision, spirit dowsing, and dowsing rod for half an hour, he spent another hour mentally reviewing the mysticism knowledge he had gained recently.

After doing that, he ripped up the old newspaper and crumpled them into a few balls. He wrote on them, "Moon Flower Candle," "Full Moon Essence Oil," and other names of materials. He followed the prescribed steps of ritualistic magic in his head in order to master every little detail. Until he was entirely familiar with it, he didn't intend to try ritualistic magic because it was both a waste of materials and also easily attracted danger.

He repeated again and again until he picked up his silver pocket watch patterned with vine-leaves and took a glance. He realized that it was a quarter to three.

He considered for a few seconds and brought the scraps of old newspapers to the kitchen on the first floor to burn them. While doing so, he made sure he was in an optimal state of mind as he prepared for the Tarot Gathering.

Locking his bedroom door once again, Klein didn't wait for the clock to strike three. He planned to enter the area above the gray fog ahead of time.

He wanted to seize the chance to explore the place thoroughly!

As Klein stood in an empty spot in his room and started walking counterclockwise, he suddenly worried that Justice and The Hanged Man had yet to enter a suitable environment. He thought of a particular matter.

Would they be disturbed or discovered?

He had previously mentioned to allow Justice and The Hanged Man to apply for "leave" ahead of time if they needed to be absent from the Gathering for some reason such as being unable to find time alone or unexpected circumstances.

It would have been an almost unsolvable problem for Klein in the past. There was no way he could build an entire server-based Internet by hand in a different world, right? Any technology beyond the telegram could expose him.

But now, he had suddenly found inspiration from ritualistic magic.

"Ritualistic magic borrows the powers of others by seeking the help of different existences. Similar incantations would make it clear who it is directed to in the beginning, such as the Evernight Goddess or the Lady of Crimson. It would be a description of the unknown and clandestine existences."

"Then, can I amend the chant and redirect the beginning of the chant towards myself?"

“Directed at me...”

“This way, even if Justice and The Hanged Man conduct the ritual in different locations, I would receive their messages.”

Klein suddenly felt fresh insight as he began analyzing the likelihood of the method working.

“There are two difficulties. First, I am not an incredibly strong high-level Sequencer. Even if the description of the incantation was directed to me, I couldn’t possibly receive the ‘request.’”

“Second, how can I ensure that the description of the chant is directed at me accurately, and doesn’t stray away and hit some other unknown existence that fits the description? That would be incredibly dangerous.”

Klein paced back and forth, deep in thought for a possible workable solution.

He went in circles with silent footsteps. Then, he naturally linked the matter with the mysterious world of the gray fog.

“Even if I can’t receive the message, that doesn’t mean the gray fog can’t. Its connection with the crimson stars can ‘drag’ a person into the space directly, regardless of where they are in the physical world.

“I could consider tying myself to the mysterious space together during the directed description...

“In accordance with this train of thought, even though I might not immediately receive the ‘request’ when the other party is holding the ritual, I will still be able to see the corresponding messages whenever I enter the gray fog.

“To put it simply, it is the difference between being online and offline on an instant messaging system.”

Klein became more excited the more he thought. He felt that his idea was worth a try.

“Hmm, what kind of description could be used to precisely direct a message to me and to the gray fog world?” He started thinking about the actual details.

In fact, he had an incantation that would definitely work. It was none other than the Loen translation of ‘The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.’ But herein lies the problem: he would lose control of the gray fog and lose his leading role. He could only exclude it.

“The Fool from an alternate world?” No way. It is quite accurate, and there is almost no other existence that fits the criteria, but it would expose my biggest secret... Klein thought of one incantation after another, but he crossed off each one.

After about seven to eight minutes, he finally decided on the description of the first paragraph that directed to him.

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era.”

It was obviously not accurate enough; therefore, Klein quickly added, “The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.”

The combination of the two lines practically limited it to him. Furthermore, he had tied the gray fog to him.

“It’s still a little short. I cannot eliminate the possibility that there are multiple spaces and rulers above the gray fog. I cannot eliminate the fact that the description might be directed to the spirit world...” Klein creased his eyebrows and planned on making it more certain.

Hmm... He thought for a full minute and finally decided on the last part of the description.

The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck!

It shared a similar meaning to “The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth for Blessings [1].” If the incantation purely depended on that part of the description, it might end up being directed away and

provoking unknown dangerous existences. But with the first two lines as a limitation, and his experience of arriving above the fog through a similar incantation, he believed that the target's description could result in a perfect lock on.

Klein wasn't sure if casting the ritualistic magic with those three descriptions would be effective, but he was definite that it would not attract the attention of another existence, It wouldn't throw Justice and The Hanged Man into danger.

Klein heaved out a long sigh and recited the incantation that he had decided upon.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck..."

He nodded his head slightly and took out his pocket watch to confirm the time.

It's already 2:58... Without further thought, Klein put away his pocket and entered Cogitation. Soon he chanted and took four steps counterclockwise to form a square.

The most ferocious noises and heart-stirring roars were heard once again. He felt the headache that was even harder to deal with than the pain of consuming the Seer potion.

The pain was not a sharp pain that tore through his head. It was a throbbing pain that made him manic and irrational. It was a pain that left him in chaotic confusion.

Klein controlled himself using Cogitation and tried hard to ignore the voices.

The muttering and murmurs receded like the tides. His body became ethereal, along with his spirituality. Everything seemed to float.

The boundless gray fog appeared before his sight, the crimson stars at varying distances from him, just like pairs of eyes.

Above the gray fog stood the palace, lofty and towering like the home of a giant. It was as though it had been there for millions of years.

All Klein did was will it and he disappeared from where he was, reappearing at the Seat of Honor at the long bronze table with twenty-two high-back chairs.

"The effect of the ritual is definitely fixed..." Klein muttered. He tapped his glabella gently and allowed the fog to engulf him, ones thicker than before. According to the description of The Hanged Man, if Justice had become a Spectator, it would be best not to reveal any of his tics before her.

Without any time for exploring, Klein extended his right hand and formed an invisible connection, connecting him to the two familiar crimson stars.

...

On the roaring blue waves of the Sonia Sea, an ancient sailboat was sailing with the wind.

Alger Wilson locked himself in the captain's cabin and made the ghost ship provide him the best protection.

He opened the pocket watch before him and laid it next to the brass sextant. The clock was ticking without joy as it exuded nervousness.

When the hour hand, minute hand, and second hand aligned, there was an explosion of crimson before Alger Wilson. It ignored the layers and layers of protection he had placed over himself.

Sigh... His sigh reverberated across the captain's room.

...

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey Hall laid against a down-feather pillow and glanced at the yellow paper in her hand. Her gemlike eyes looked like they had two souls spiraling slowly in them.

Her gaze was calm and cool, as if she were waiting for a play to begin.

As the crimson red erupted, she looked at herself being swallowed with complete detachment.

...

Above the gray fog, in the magnificent palace, on the ancient and mottled long bronze table.

Klein, who had already activated his Spiritual Vision, looked over when Audrey Hall's figure began to form. He was not surprised to see that the colors deep in her aura had blended together. It became pure and serene, like a lake that was clear and reflective.

She really did become a Beyonder... Klein was just about to move his gaze away when he suddenly saw the chair belonging to Miss Justice change.

The bright stars on the back of the chair moved swiftly, forming an illusory constellation that didn't belong to reality.

That constellation was familiar to Klein because it was one of the symbols of mysticism.

It was a symbol that represented "Giant Dragon"!

Spectator... Giant Dragon... Klein restrained himself from shaking his head and looked over at the back of The Hanged Man's chair.

Typically speaking, it was impossible for him to see the back of the chair from his angle, but this was where he was in control. Everything presented itself according to his will.

The constellation on the back of the chair had not changed, but since Klein had grasped the basics of mysticism, he wasn't as ignorant as before. He could recognize that it was the symbol of "Storm."

Sailor... Keeper of the Sea... Storm... That's reasonable. The color deep in The Hanged Man's aura is much purer than it was... Has he advanced? Oh yeah, what about the symbol behind my chair?

Klein suppressed his impulse to look, rapped the edge of the long table thrice just like before, and smiled as he said, "Congratulations, Miss Justice, you are a Beyonder now."

He can tell straight away? Audrey was stunned and smiled faintly.

"Thank you, Mr. Fool, and thank you, Mr. Hanged Man."

"That was much faster that I thought," Alger Wilson said honestly.

Klein didn't continue the topic but tapped his glabella and said with a smile, "Lady, Sir, have either of you found Roselle's diary?"

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1. In Chinese, Yellow refers to Earth, and Black refers to Heaven.

Upon hearing The Fool's question, Audrey did not immediately answer like in the past. Instead, she widened her crystalline eyes and glanced at The Hanged Man with a scrutinous attitude.

Alger subconsciously subdued his body motions. After a few seconds of silence, he said, "I found two pages of the Emperor Roselle's diary and have memorized their contents."

"I have one page," Audrey, whose vision was obscured by the fog, said as though she was removed from the conversation.

"Pretty good." Klein did not allow his joy or his disappointment be noticed from his voice.

He felt joy as there were three full pages, but disappointment also because there were only three pages. Their initial search for the diary was definitely easier, for all they had to do was ask through their connections and channels they were already familiar with. Collecting the pages would become more and more difficult as time went on as it would involve more and more elements.

"Should we 'express' them now?" Audrey inquired with a calm tone.

"Yes." Klein simply nodded.

He maintained his posture without any change. He had to be cautious in front of a Spectator.

As he finished his sentence, pieces of yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and dark red fountain pens appeared in front of Audrey and Alger.

The two of them picked up their pens and started to recall the symbols they had seen. They also infused the emotions of expressing them out.

Silently, lines of text appeared on the goatskin. Some of them appeared proper, some delicate, others slanted.

In a mere minute, the contents that Alger and Audrey had forcibly memorized were all written.

Klein willed the three pieces of parchment into his hands.

He gave the pages a cursory glance and realized that some of the grammar was wrong. There were also missing and wrong words in the content.

But experimentation had proved that incorrect sequencing of words to some extent did not affect the overall comprehension of Chinese. Klein was also not afraid of missing words since he often read web novels filled with censored asterisks.

"8th April. I stood at the bow of Black King and stretched my arms, saying to Grimm and Edwards, 'My fortune is yours for the taking, but you'll have to find it first. I left everything I own at the ends of the Fog Sea!' They did not understand my humor at all and even asked if I really had other treasures. How boring. You can't be my Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse if you keep at that!"

"11th April. I discovered a nameless island that was not on a safe sea route. There are a good number of extraordinary animals there, no—I prefer calling them extraordinary beings; it feels more impressive that way. Other than that, there are several weird creatures on the island. I believe that if Darwin had been transmigrated there, there is no way he could have written his Theory of Evolution."

"15th April. Grimm has suddenly become a little odd. Has he been infected by something?"

When did Emperor Roselle, who was born in the Intis Kingdom, set off on a voyage? The Fog Sea should be the sea west of the Intis Republic... Yea, I need to use historical information from the library to cross reference this... Klein quickly finished reading a page, casting his gaze to the back of the piece of paper.

At this point, he no longer hid the fact that he could decipher Emperor Roselle's secret symbols since this ability fitted the persona and status of The Fool. Audrey and Alger did not speak. They waited silently, as if unsurprised by such a revelation. In fact, they even believed that it was only right.

"2nd October. They actually wanted me to marry Matilda from the Abel family without even consulting me first! Heavens, I have not even met her! No, I must decline! Even if I were to run away from home and survive on my own and suffer the

vicissitudes of life, I must fight against this marriage!"

"5th October. Miss Matilda is really pretty."

"6th October. Her personality and her demeanor is just my type. I am starting to look forward to the marriage."

Hey, Emperor, where is your integrity? Klein leaned back into his seat, not allowing his emotions to pass through the fog.

He realized that Gustav did not write in his diary every day early on. Most of the time, he would only write in the diary when there were certain events that he needed to lampoon, record, or to vent his emotions.

He shifted his gaze downward. Klein looked at the last sentence of this page.

"9th October. They actually called me the Son of the Steam. I like that very much."

Klein was a little disappointed that the information in the first two pages was of little value.

But he did not turn sullen. He moved the third page to the top. This page had content written on both sides of the paper.

"21st May. The Church of the God of Craftsmanship gave me two choices, two beginning Sequence pathways. One of them is the Savant. It is a complete Sequence pathway they possess. The other is Mystery Pryer, which they obtained from the Moses Ascetic Order, but it lacks the higher Sequences."

"22nd May. My choice was easy: Savant! The Savant has a complete Sequence pathway! Although wielding more information on mysticism can aid my return home, the problem is that if I am not strong enough, there is a need to acquire external help for transmigration. And I do not know if this external entity would be good or bad, benevolent or malicious. I cannot control it, and thus it could be very dangerous. In that case, why not strengthen myself and return by relying on my own powers? Thus, the complete Sequence was the most important factor in my considerations!"

"23rd May. I have become a Savant. With the power of the potion, I actually recalled all the knowledge I had learned in the past, such as physics, chemistry, etc...

"I have not only recalled the knowledge, but I understand it more deeply, as well as its possible applications and implications. Haha, this is a 'job' specially tailored for a transmigrator like me from an alternate realm. I will be able to express my advantage to the greatest extent! I have to say that if I were to return in my present state to the third year of high school, I would definitely become top scholar. If I could further specialize in an area, it wouldn't even be too hard for me to become a scientist."

"26th May. I am enjoying my status as a Savant. Something odd worth mentioning. When I address myself as a Savant, doing things that are in line with this role, the murmurings that drive me crazy become considerably softer. I have also been able to control my occasional temper outbursts. I have also recalled the matter regarding the diary.

"Is this the 'acting' that the mysterious Mr. Zaratul mentioned? This could be key in resolving the side effects posed by potions."

As Klein read the diary page, he had a deep realization that there was a fundamental difference between how he and Emperor Roselle did things.

For example, regarding the matter of returning home, Klein considered grasping in-depth knowledge of mysticism to avoid risks and accomplish his goal, while Emperor Roselle preferred to rely on himself and face the risk.

I have to say, I envy people like that sometimes. Perhaps everyone yearns for something they do not possess... Of course, I also have to consider strengthening myself; both of these are important, Klein thought, sighing a little.

The description provided by Emperor Roselle about acting instilled Klein with confidence that the conclusion he made about acting yesterday was more or less correct.

He put the three diary pages down, looked up at Justice and The Hanged Man. He smiled and said, "My apologies, I was too absorbed in reading them."

Audrey calmed the envy in her heart and smiled faintly.

"I can understand. I hope to one day be able to exchange information about the diary's contents."

"That will require a price." Klein smiled and glanced at Justice, then swept his gaze towards the silent Hanged Man.

Audrey put her palms together and placed them in front of her.

"Mr. Fool, Mr. Hanged Man, I have three questions to ask. If you think that the answers warrant a high price, tell me what you want, I will try my best to seek it."

"No problem," Alger answered succinctly.

Klein nodded and leaned back further, making himself comfortable.

Audrey thought for a few seconds and said, "The first question is, what does 'acting' really mean? I realize that the remnant psyche in the potion has minute effects on me; is that because

I've been acting as a Spectator all this while?"

Alger did not speak; instead, he looked at The Fool, as though waiting for him to give an answer.

Klein rubbed his finger on the edge of the table and said in a relaxed tone, "Let me explain this with an analogy. Imagine the core powers of your potion as a tightly guarded castle. The remnants of the psyche that can cause a lash back resides within that castle. Our goal is to get rid of it and become the true master of the castle.

"There are two ways we can do that. The first is to forcefully invade the castle. There is no guarantee that this will work, and you will most definitely injure yourself unless you can suppress it with absolute power. But of course, we are not equipped to do that.

"The second way is to get the owner of the castle to extend an invitation. This invitation can allow us to slide through the scrutiny of the guards and infiltrate the castle. We can then easily finish off the enemies. But the problem lies in the fact that this invitation specifies the facial features and characteristics of the guest. Thus, we have to disguise ourselves and act as the guest, do you understand?"

Alger immediately asked, as if he had anticipated this reply, "Then the aforementioned invitation is the name of the potion's Sequence?"

"That's right," Klein answered with great affirmation.

Audrey froze for a moment, having the sudden feeling that she completely understood what 'acting' meant.

She immediately exited her Spectator state due to her excitement. She praised in joy, "What an exceptional method, I think—I think it fits your title. Its style is very compatible with The Fool... I

would never have believed that acting would have such an effect. Luckily, I have been acting as a Spectator the past few days."

She paused for a moment before saying, "I think that this is a very valuable answer; my heart is not at ease accepting it for nothing. Mr. Fool, what do you need in exchange? Of course, I still remember that I owe you a page of Emperor Roselle's diary." "More pages of Roselle's diary, or..." Klein paused for a moment.

He had wanted to get information about the Sequence regarding the Seer but felt that such a low-level request would ruin the mystical image of The Fool. Thus, he chose to give up on it and planned to ask them discreetly some other day.

I just advanced recently and have yet to completely digest the Seer potion... He consoled himself and added on without expression, "Anything regarding the Antigonus family, even if I'm already aware of them myself."

Alger remained silent for a few seconds. He looked at the top of the long bronze table for a moment before slowly opening his mouth.

"Mr. Fool... I believe I can pay you back immediately with the information you requested just now."

"No problem." Klein tried to maintain his unchanging deep tone.

He rested his left elbow on the armrest of his chair and supported his forehead slightly with his fingers, posing as though he was listening calmly.

Alger deliberated over his words and said, "The Antigonus is an ancient family. Their history can be traced back to the Cataclysm Epoch before the Fourth Epoch and is related to the second Blasphemy Slate."

The second Blasphemy Slate? There's a second Blasphemy Slate? How many are there? Klein's pupils shrank, and he nearly changed his posture.

According to what The Hanged Man and Justice have said previously, the Blasphemy Slate contained the profound mysteries of the twenty-two paths of the divine!

There are two of such important items, or even more?

Twenty-two paths of the divine... Sequences and pathways... Could these two nouns mean the same thing? Every complete Sequence pathway leads straight to the throne of the divine?

At that instant, the description of the second Blasphemy Slate gave Klein numerous thoughts. He believed that if not for the thick grayish-white fog concealing him, his emotional reaction would probably have been discovered by Miss Spectator.

As for the words Cataclysm Epoch, he was no stranger to that term as a historian. It was the name of the third epoch.

After his recent revision, Klein even knew that the third epoch was separated into two eras: the Glorious Era and the Cataclysm Era.

"A second Blasphemy Slate?" Audrey plainly revealed her ignorance on the matter.

Before she calmed her emotions, she returned to her Spectator state.

Nice question! Klein secretly cheered for Miss Justice.

It was a question inconvenient for him to ask as The Fool.

Alger stole a glance at The Fool and noticed that his posture remained the same, nor did he make a sound. Hence, he thought and answered, "The first Blasphemy Slate appeared in the Dark Epoch, which is the second epoch where we humans struggled to survive under the protection of gods. The second Blasphemy Slate appeared at the end of the third epoch. It could even be said that its appearance symbolized the end of the Cataclysm Epoch.

"The content of the two Blasphemy Slates is kept secret by the seven major churches. I only know bits and pieces of it. I only know that they involve the paths of the divine, but I am not sure of the differences between them."

"Was the Blasphemy Slate that Emperor Roselle saw the first or the second?" Audrey asked curiously.

Upon hearing that, Klein recalled what Alger said about the potion names during the first Gathering. He said that the names of the Sequence potions were derived from the Blasphemy Slate!

Similarly, Captain had also mentioned that the formation and completion of the potion system was thanks to the birth of the Blasphemy Slate... That indirectly confirms that the paths of the divine are the Sequence pathway! Klein answered his earlier question silently.

Then Alger simply replied, "The second one."

The glint in Audrey's eyes diminished and she returned to her Spectator state. She did not continue asking questions; instead, all she did was focus her gaze on The Hanged Man.

It was obvious that her scrutiny made Alger uncomfortable, but he suppressed the emotions within him. He lowered his voice and continued, "During the Solomon Dynasty in the Fourth Epoch, although the Antigonus family was considered an illustrious part of the aristocracy, they didn't do anything very memorable until they supported the establishment of the Tudor Empire. They then stood right in the middle of the stage of Northern Continent.

"In that period, Antigonus, Amon, Abraham, Jacob, and others were illustrious names of the human kingdom. However, after the War of the Four Emperors, the Blood Emperor from the Tudor Empire perished. They fell from the top of their pedestal and are now hunted by the seven deities.

"I am not sure about the actual process, but I do know that the Antigonus family was destroyed at the hands of the Church of Evernight. Mr. Fool, if you'd like to know more, I am afraid that you can only obtain the information from the Church of Evernight or from the few ancient secret organizations. You know which few I am referring to."

I don't... Klein nodded while feeling bitter inside.

"Okay."

The Secret Order is one. Captain and Old Neil mentioned the Moses Ascetic Order. I wonder if the Psychology Alchemists count...

While he mentally checked off the candidates, Alger provided him with the last bits of information.

"I similarly have no idea which Sequence pathways the Antigonus family held. There are only two adjectives that appear repetitively in the descriptions of the Antigonus family, and those are "strange" and "terrifying."

Strange and terrifying... Thinking back to the notebook, the original Klein and his classmates, and what happened to Ray Bieber's mother, it really is aptly worded... Klein continuously rapped the edge of the long table with the tip of his finger a couple of times.

Then, he slowly began to speak.

"Very well, I am satisfied with the payment."

The reason he continuously rapped the long table lightly with his fingers was to emphasize the action, to make Justice and The Hanged Man believe that he had a habit of rapping in order to conceal the fact that the same motion was used to activate and deactivate his Spirit Vision.

"It's my pleasure." Alger did not say anything else.

Audrey took a look at The Hanged Man and then The Fool. She smiled faintly and said, "Then, I shall ask the second question: what is the name of the subsequent potion for Spectator? Where can I find the clues?"

I'd also like to ask so straightforwardly, but different choices lead to different difficulties... Klein did not speak but cast his gaze towards The Hanged Man.

Alger remained silent for a few seconds before saying, "I'll answer the question for free because I led you on this pathway.

"The subsequent Sequence for Spectator is Sequence 8 Telepathist. The ancient name of Sequence 7 is Psyche Analyst but is called Psychiatrist now. This is what I found out from a member of the Psychology Alchemists. I think they should have quite a number of potion formulas for this pathway."

Psychology Alchemists... Spirit Medium Daly was rather approving of their theory, but Captain thought of them as evil and crazy... Klein listened while in deep thought.

"Do you know the whereabouts of that particular Psychology Alchemists member?" asked Audrey as her eyes beamed with joy.

Be it Telepathist or Psychiatrist, both names appealed to her aesthetics.

Alger gave a rare laugh.

"I do. He's immersed in the seas around Sonia Island. I sank him with my own hands.

"If you would like to look for the Psychology Alchemists, I have to apologize since I severed the clues."

He was not worried that Justice would find his identity through his description because he did that on his own, out of the public eye.

"Sank..." Audrey was at a loss how to reply or what expression to wear.

She drew a deep breath and suddenly failed to maintain her Spectator state. She asked bashfully, "The third question. If—and I'm saying if—a normal animal were to drink a Sequence 9 potion, what would happen?"

What kind of a question is that? Klein tapped his glabella unnoticeably with his finger that was supporting his forehead.

Very quickly, he saw the changes in color and noticed that Audrey's emotions had turned frantic, nervous, and a little ashamed.

Could she have done something that stupid? Klein was astounded, but didn't find it strange.

After the past two Gatherings, he was certain that Miss Justice was quite an airhead.

The Hanged Man, Alger, was obviously dumbfounded as well. He took a while to reply.

"Normal animals do not have the brains of humans. They wouldn't be able to learn Cogitation in a timely manner. Therefore, it would most likely lead to immediate death or a breakdown into a monster. However, if they survived the initial ingestion of the potion, they should become an extraordinary creature. If the potion has the ability to enhance their intelligence, they can even become smarter."

"Alright." Audrey breathed out a silent sigh and nodded while saying with a relaxed tone. "I have no other questions."

Alger considered for a moment and did not mention matters regarding the Aurora Order or the Listener. Similarly, he shook his head and said, "Nor do I."

"I have something." Klein didn't change his posture but said with a smile, "It will require your cooperation."

He had yet to turn off his Spirit Vision, and he immediately saw that The Hanged Man was showing signs of nervousness, while Miss Justice was too simple-minded to show fear or carefulness.

Before they could reply, Klein comforted them, "Don't worry. It's trivial. If it succeeds, it will be beneficial to you, so I wouldn't be paying extra remuneration."

"Go ahead." Audrey instinctively entered the Spectator state, but she couldn't see through the thick gray fog engulfing The Fool.

"As you will," Alger replied, steadying himself.

Klein moved his fingers and smiled when he said, "Previously, I said that we would do some experiments to enable you to ask for a leave of absence. That way, you do not have to worry if you have to be somewhere inappropriate on a Monday afternoon."

"That's our wish." Audrey loosened her tightly knitted eyebrows.

Alger thought and said, "What do you need us to do?"

"You could try a piece of ritualistic magic during your free time. It need not be too formal. As long as you are in an environment that won't be disturbed... Put four brand new candles on an altar, placed on four corners respectively. It's best if they are candles with a sandalwood scent. Put a loaf of white bread near the candle on the top left corner, a bowl of Feynapotter noodles near the candle on the top

right corner, paella by the candle on the bottom left corner, and a Desi pie by the candle on the bottom right corner... Use a silver knife to make a sealed spiritual environment...”

Klein described his modified version of the luck enhancement ritual and taught Miss Justice how to create a spiritual environment for free.

To be frank, as the ritual was targeted at himself, Klein believed that the former part, which was intended to attract the interest of an entity, could be omitted completely. However, he still worked hard to make the procedure seem important. Of course, it didn’t comply with what Old Neil taught about gods being second and oneself being third.

“...Mix moon flowers, gold mint, slumber flowers, fingered citron, and rock-rose together then distill it. Extract it for its essential oil, then pour a drop onto each candle...”

Audrey listened with piqued interest as she recorded all that he said. When he was done, she asked, “What about the

incantation? Mr. Fool, what’s the corresponding incantation?”

Alger stopped writing with the fountain pen in his hand as well. He turned his head to look at The Fool.

Klein, who was immersed in the gray fog, tapped the edge of the long table with his finger lightly and said calmly and monotonously in Hermes, “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the

King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck...”

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era... the mysterious ruler above the gray fog... King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck..." Audrey Hall recited the three descriptions to herself silently. She suddenly felt a tumultuous wave of emotion go through her, preventing her from maintaining her Spectator state.

As an enthusiast of mysticism, she had learned Hermes that was used in rituals and had tested out the rituals that fellow noble enthusiasts mentioned in private gatherings before she was pulled into the gray fog or made formal contact with Beyonder powers.

None of those rituals had any effects, but they had given Audrey a basic understanding of the structure of incantations.

Thus, she knew clearly what these three incantations described and signified.

The descriptions usually described one of the seven gods that looked over this world!

Thus, The Fool's incantation was claiming status equal to the Lady of Crimson, Mother of Concealment, and the Empress of Misfortune and Horror!

Is Mr. Fool the unknown, mysterious, powerful, godlike entity that Glaint spoke of? The source of danger that we must avoid in rituals? Audrey quickly recalled the comments made during the strange rituals which she and her friends did not dare attempt back then. She was momentarily at a loss for words.

Alger Wilson, who knew and understood much more than

Audrey, shivered from the bottom of his heart.

If the ritualistic magic which Mr. Fool designed truly points to him to allow him to accept our requests, w-we would have to be addressing him with Him. He is to be addressed in the third person, which is reserved for gods...

How lucky, how smart I was to act in concert with him and not do anything foolish. Even when I was testing him, I did not step beyond the boundaries of normalcy...

Could he perhaps be an ancient, mysterious, horrifying existence, only that he does not appear before us in his true form and name... The Primordial Demoness, the Hidden Sage, or the true Creator which many mysterious churches believe in?

Alger understood that The Fool he was looking at now might not be his true form. He might not even have a gender or be a humanoid creature.

Klein propped his forehead up with one hand and tapped on the table with the other hand. He acutely noticed the changes happening to The Hanged Man and Justice.

But he acted as though nothing happened, as if everything was within his expectations. He continued without any care.

"I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

"Moon flower, an herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Fingered citron, an herb that belongs to the sun, please bestow your powers to my incantation."

...

He finished describing the incantations that belonged to another type of ritual. After he was done, he smiled.

“Lady, sir, have you memorized it?”

“Ah...” Audrey exhaled. She quickly covered her mouth and recalled seriously.

With her improved memory as a Spectator, she quickly processed the information and repeated the incantations as a form of confirmation.

Alger acted more normally. His pen did not stop for a moment, no matter what he was thinking about.

After Klein confirmed that Audrey was correct, he smiled and said, “If this test is successful, then we shall modify the ritual next time to achieve what we want to do.”

“I hope that you will have the time to complete the ritual no later than Wednesday.”

He intended to come in here again on Thursday night to ascertain if the ritualistic magic was successful.

As for why he did not allow The Hanged Man and Justice to directly request a leave of absence, Klein was worried that he would be unable to discern if the results were from them asking for leave or merely the outcome of an attempt of the ritualistic magic. Was he to pull them into the Gathering if that happened?

“By your will.” Audrey and Alger replied respectfully, collecting themselves.

“According to The Hanged Man’s suggestion last week, we shall have a time for casual conversation after all official issues have been discussed. Who shall begin?” Klein gave a hand gesture signaling for someone to start.

Audrey sighed and said, “Mr. Fool, the suggestion you made regarding the exam selection and the separation between civil and political matters has received the approval of many members of parliament. Perhaps it could become a reality. Of course, with the efficiency of this government, the bill will only appear half a year from now at the earliest.”

She was not worried that The Hanged Man would track her down using this piece of information. She had intentionally and intermittently dropped hints and guided those proud wives to think that they had conceived the idea. Those ladies had rushed to tell their husbands, their fathers, and their brothers.

At that moment Audrey felt as though she was watching a flock of golden peacocks showcasing their tail feathers.

She believed that those women would drill it in themselves that they came up with the idea to claim the glory for themselves.

They would soon forget about what Audrey’s role in the matter was, fighting among themselves to see who thought of the suggestion first.

Using this remarkable way to change the system of a kingdom gave Audrey a weird sense of satisfaction, as if she had found a way for a Spectator to influence the plot of a play.

“Let’s hope so,” Alger replied sarcastically.

He paused for a few seconds, then glanced at The Fool. He deliberated before saying, “In recent decades, the amount of activities of the various secret organizations has seen an upward trend. In fact, there are even new secret organizations appearing, some of them having reached scale with a good number of Beyonders.”

Are you trying to ask me for the reason? I have not even gained access to information about illegal organizations... Klein merely smiled without commenting on The Hanged Man’s news. He changed the subject and said vaguely, “An ancient power is about to wake from its slumber.”

For example, the power represented by the Antigonus family diary...

“Is that so...” Alger muttered softly to himself, as though he recalled something.

Klein swept his gaze toward The Hanged Man, then past Justice and said with a smile, “If there is nothing else to share, then let’s end today’s gathering here.”

“By your will.” Audrey and Alger stood up together.

Klein moved his finger and severed his connection with the dark red stars. He watched as the two figures vanished from the magnificent palace.

He stood up and turned toward his own chair which was also the back of the Seat of Honor at the bronze table. He looked at its symbol.

Radiant stars formed a strange symbol. It was not a symbol that fit anything in Klein’s present understanding of mysticism.

He observed it closely before identifying the “Pupil-less Eye,” a symbol representing concealment. He also saw Contorted Lines that represented change. Each of the symbols were missing a portion and were overlapped with each other, creating a new symbol.

An incomplete concealment and an incomplete change... What do we get when we add them together? Klein creased his brows and muttered to himself, unable to come up with an answer.

He retracted his gaze and walked along the ancient, magnificent palace. His eyes scanned every corner of the palace.

“Back when I casually imagined this place, it was merely a rough concept; I did not describe the shape of the palace, table, or chairs... Where does this design come from? The best choice? The first prototype? Or are they a reflection of reality?” Klein suddenly had a question he neglected previously as he looked at the palace.

Sigh, I have to say that even though I am a keyboard warrior, I am lacking experience in many areas. I am also not observant enough, to the point of only realizing this question now... With such a self-reflection, Klein made a serious effort to examine every corner of the palace, but did not find any other living things or anything strange.

Klein did not dare to venture deeper, which seemed to be an illusory land without boundaries. He was afraid that he would end up completely lost.

Wow, this place is indeed filled with mysteries... Who knows if there will be any changes to this area when I become more powerful... Klein sighed. He unleashed his spirituality and enveloped himself within, causing him to feel the rapid rush of plummeting.

Everything flew past quickly. All kinds of illusions shattered. He tore through the grayish-white fog and saw reality. He saw the table, curtains, and clothes rack in his room.

...

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey saw the oil painting that hung on the wall. She felt the softness the down-feathered pillow under her head provided.

She did not stand up immediately; instead, she seriously recalled what had happened during the gathering, as if she was watching a play she had already watched.

“Mr. Fool had a certain confidence in his tone when he told us to try the ritual and gave us the descriptions of the mysterious ruler, the King of Yellow and Black... Confidence...” Audrey exhaled as she was analyzing this silently, her body shuddering slightly.

Forget it, since I cannot fight it, there’s no need to think too much about it... Mr. Fool has always appeared friendly; he should be an entity that has a respect for order... Audrey’s mood improved rapidly. She thought about her acting, and the weakening backlash of the potion.

She hummed a merry tune and got off her bed. She walked toward the door and adjusted her state of mind, taking on her state as a Spectator.

As she opened the door of the room, she saw a maid walking past. She saw the old calluses on her hands, the marks on her face, and other similar details. She could deduce many things from these observations.

At this point, Audrey had a strange feeling. She quickly turned to look at the shaded corner of the balcony.

She saw her golden retriever Susie sitting there, silently observing her, just like how she observed the maid.

My Goddess... Audrey's lips twitched as she sighed. She wanted so much to hide her face.

...

On the Sonia Sea, in the heavily protected captain's quarters.

Alger woke up and noticed that nothing had changed around him. It was as if nothing had happened.

He sighed and thought to himself, *An ancient existence?*

...

Klein, who had exited the ritual, pulled open the curtains. He took out his notebook and began writing once again.

He recalled the contents of Emperor Roselle's diary, hoping to reinforce the memory through writing and prevent himself from forgetting it in the future.

Klein reread the notes several times after he finished writing. Finally, he tore the notes up and incinerated them.

I shouldn't forget the most salient points if I do this once a week. But with time and the increasing complexity of my missions... How unfortunate, I do not have better ideas for the time being. I have not learned any cryptography... Klein collected himself and stretched his neck. He planned on heading to the Divination Club.

A Seer was defined differently by different people. No one could say that another person's methods were wrong. So, Klein, who did not know which kind of Seer fit the requirements of the potion, could only correct it as he experimented to ascertain which one was the best fit!

Before Klein left home, he took the time to meticulously clean up his suit and top hat with a small brush and a handkerchief. Then, he washed his white shirt, changing into a similar linen shirt along with the only decent cheap coat he had. He then briskly walked out onto the street.

First, Melissa's dress. Then, Benson's suit. Only then can I consider a second suit for myself. Money is never enough... Besides, we need to save money to buy porcelain tableware to receive our guests... Plus, I have to save money to buy a variety of materials related to mysticism... Klein sat on the public carriage and took note of the financial status at home. The more he did the math, the more he shook his head.

He reckoned he needed at least a year to let himself, his brother, and his sister live as a middle-class family.

Of course, that was without taking promotions and pay rises into consideration.

The public carriage drove past the streets and stopped opposite to the Divination Club on Howes Street.

Klein pressed down on his black top hat and hopped off the carriage. He walked along the familiar street and entered the club located on the second floor. He then saw the beautiful brunette, Angelica.

There was a hint of swelled redness to her eyes, but she looked extremely relaxed.

Klein raised his hand to tap his glabella lightly and carefully examined her. He found out that the grayness deep in Angelica's emotional colors had greatly dispersed. It had been replaced with sunlight-like whiteness.

After taking it in, Klein walked over, took off his hat, and smiled.

"Madam Angelica, it's a lovely day today, isn't it?"

Angelica lifted her head and was briefly shocked. She then beamed and said, "You are just like Mr. Vincent's cat. You don't make any sounds while walking, do you? You managed to tell? Hehe, I forgot that you are a fortune-teller skilled in facereading..."

She paused, then she gently bit her lip before bowing.

"Thank you. Thank you for your suggestion yesterday. I feel much better. I haven't been this relaxed, happy, and contented in a year."

Upon hearing her show her sincere gratitude, Klein was infected with the joy and happiness she had. The corner of his lips lifted, and he said, "It's my pleasure."

As he spoke, he could feel his spirituality relax and turn livelier.

Is this what the Seer potion wants? A Seer that can really help the inquirer? Klein pinched his glabella as though he was thinking before secretly tapping twice.

It had to be said that he found the action of activating and deactivating his Spirit Vision in practice insufficiently inconspicuous. However, the problem was that he hadn't thought of a better solution yet. As he had just become a Seer recently, his spiritually had yet to reach its limit, and the same was applied to his mastery. Hence, there didn't seem to be many suitable locations for an activation switch for his Spiritual Vision. The glabella was the best option by far.

When I become a true Seer after fully digesting the potion, I should be able to design a more inconspicuous activation motion... Klein nodded unnoticeably and walked towards the half-opened meeting room.

"Coffee or tea?" Angelica asked hurriedly.

"Desi coffee." Klein answered. He planned on trying out all the drinks the Divination Club had to offer.

Then, he saw that there were six or seven members present, but not Hanass Vincent who was almost always was.

“Mr. Vincent isn’t here?” Klein stopped in his tracks and asked a passing question.

Angelica was taken aback as she said, “Mr. Vincent doesn’t come every day. He accepted an invitation to give a lecture for a divination organization at Enmat Harbor. Are you looking for him?”

“Not at all. I was just curious. After all, I’ve seen him every time I’ve come here.” Klein shook his head with a smile.

Meanwhile, he realized that there was a familiar face among the seven members present.

Glacis, who had divined for him before, was present!

Glacis was reading some information on the table with his monocle when he suddenly sensed someone looking at him. He lifted his head and cast his gaze.

Obvious joy suffused his face as he propped himself up with both hands and stood up. He dashed towards Klein and stopped before him.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti. I have been wondering if you would come today.

“I heard from Angelica that you are not a doctor, but a fortuneteller who is good at face-reading?”

Klein smiled.

“That’s not the only thing I’m good at. Mr. Glacis. You no longer seem plagued by your ailment?”

He pinched his forehead and tapped his glabella twice. He noticed that Glacis’s health colors had returned to normal.

“Yes, I was very regretful for not taking your suggestion back then. Luckily, there is a very amazing apothecary near my place. He gave my wife a magical medicine which brought me away from death,” Glacis said emotionally.

As a quasi-member of the Nighthawks, Klein asked out of occupational interest, “Very amazing apothecary? Very magical medicine?”

Magical? How magical? Is it within the range of Beyonders?

“He said that it was a kind of folk medicine from Lenburg. In short, it helped with treating my illness a lot,” Glacis answered, without noticing anything abnormal about the question.

Folk medicine apothecary? Klein tapped his glabella as though he was thinking.

“What’s his name? Where does he stay? As you know, even a fortune-teller can’t guarantee that they would remain in the pink of health all the time. Perhaps, I will need to go to purchase some medication from him in the future.”

Klein learned from his teacher and classmates that the current health system in the world was in a nascent state. There was almost no cure to many diseases, so the magical medications and miraculous apothecaries still controlled the market. There was no harm in knowing more, since it could one day serve useful.

Glacis answered honestly, “His name is Lawson Darkwade. He has a tiny store at 18 Vlad Street in East Borough, named Lawson’s Folk Herb Store.”

“Thank you.” Klein remembered it and spoke sincerely.

Glacis turned around and invited him to sit beside him. At that moment, Angelica came over to serve the coffee she brewed.

Compared to Southville coffee, Desi coffee is more fragrant, but has quite an inferior taste... Klein took a sip and savored it for a moment.

Glacis hurriedly deliberated his words when he saw Klein put down his white porcelain cup.

"Mr. Moretti, can I request a divination from you? I will pay according to a price you set."

"Eight pence is sufficient. I will not raise the price out of the blue." Klein was hoping that someone would request his divination services. "Do you need a divination room?"

"Alright. Topaz." Glacis led the way with much more familiarity.

After entering the divination room and locking the door, Klein sat behind the long table. He asked in a serious voice, "Mr. Glacis, what would you like the divination to be about?"

"I have an investment opportunity, but the amount of money it involves is huge. If it fails, my family and I will take a heavy hit. I wish to know if it will be a successful investment." Glacis volunteered the information. "I have divined using tarot cards previously. Hmm, a divination after purifying my soul. The result was pretty good. Yes, I did the interpretation myself, but I did not violate the principles of those symbols."

Klein thought and asked curiously, "It'd be great if you could describe the entire situation once more and give me your information again. It'd be best if you have the other party's information, too. We will do an astrolabe divination."

"Alright." Glacis organized his words and said, "When Mister Lanevus examined the Hornacis mountain range, he discovered a gigantic mine rich in high-quality iron ore. He poured in all his savings to buy that land and hired a professional company to survey it. The result was a heartening one."

"He lacks funds needed for subsequent developments, so he formed a steelworks company and intends to apply for a loan from the bank using the project. At the same time, he will also issue a corresponding number of shares to raise its initial capital. The plan is still in its preparatory stage and promises fat returns."

Klein, who had been reading the newspaper recently and also happened to be a "history expert," knew that there were shares in this world. He also knew that the concept of shares was derived from Emperor Roselle. *Yeah, him again.*

During the colonization of the Southern Continent, he had set up the West Balam company and solved the nation's fiduciary matters successfully by raising funds from the public through the issue of shares. As such, he had the first-movers advantage from colonization.

Because the returns were great, this development continued on. For example, there were railway shares, mining shares, steam development shares, and so on and so forth. There were some that succeeded and there were some that failed. Hence, it catalyzed the formation of organizations like the Backlund Stock Exchange.

Besides that, the Emperor Roselle had created national bonds, unit trusts, and other financial products. The former had become the most stable form investment, with a return of four to six percent interest.

Klein remembered that Benson had once said that if he could inherit three thousand pounds, there was no need to work hard any further. The stable annual interest of about five percent would result in an annual fixed income return of 150 pounds, roughly equivalent to Klein's annual income at present.

This is known as rentier capitalism... Klein sighed and asked carefully, "Are you sure there's nothing wrong about this? Is Lanevus trustworthy?"

"I've seen his property papers and the inspection report. There is the Sivellaus county government's stamp and an endorsement of a professional company. Plus, inside Mr. Lanevus's office is a group photo of him with Sir Deweyville and the Mayor." Glacis nodded in reply.

Group photo? That doesn't mean anything... Klein, who was born in an era of information explosion, had seen too many similar incidents. He didn't buy the story because of that.

However, it didn't matter if he believed it or not. He could only pick up a pen and draw a corresponding astrolabe according to the crucial time and information that Glacis had provided him with.

After a long while, Klein pointed to the astrolabe and said, "You should be able to tell that this will be a very unsuccessful endeavor. Below the flourishing surface is a cliff, a chasm. My divination suggestions going around it, to avoid it."

"..." Glacis fell into silence, his mouth turning agape a few times before he closed it.

A few minutes later, he said with a rueful smile, "I'll consider it carefully when I'm back."

Upon hearing this answer, Klein could only shake his head with a silent sigh. He realized the helplessness of a Seer.

A Seer could only give suggestions and not make the decision for others.

Just as the two left the Topaz room, Angelica walked over and said, "Mr. Moretti, someone wishes for your divination."

When she said that, she added with a whisper, "He did not ask for my recommendations. Nor did he view the album."

Has my reputation spread? Klein turned towards the reception hall in puzzlement.

Klein proceeded a few steps forward and saw the client. He was dressed in a formal black suit and a halved top hat. He held a gold-inlaid wooden cane and his short blond hair flared from the sides. His nose was aquiline like a hawk's beak.

Anna's fiancé... The Joyce Meyer that went through a terrifying ordeal. Klein, who had seen him in his dream divination, immediately greeted with a smile, "Good afternoon, Mr. Meyer."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti." Joyce took off his hat and bowed in greeting. "Thank you for the advice you gave Anna. She cannot stop praising how miraculous you are."

Klein chortled and said, "I did not change a thing. You should be thanking yourself. Without your determination and your hope for a better tomorrow, you wouldn't have been able to overcome such an ordeal."

After the exchange of pleasantries, Klein could not help but lampoon inwardly.

Does this count as mutual professional bootlicking?

"In all honesty, I still find my coming back alive a dream. I still cannot believe that I survived wave after wave of terrifying ordeals." Joyce shook his head wistfully.

Without waiting for Klein's reply, he asked curiously, "You knew who I was the moment you saw me. Was that because of my unique nose, or because you divined that I would visit you?"

"I had your detailed information. That is enough for a seer," Klein answered vaguely, behaving like how a charlatan would.

Joyce was indeed stunned. More than ten seconds later, he squeezed a smile.

"Mr. Moretti, I wish to request a divination from you."

The moment he finished his sentence, he suddenly realized something.

Mr. Klein Moretti had addressed himself as a seer, not a fortuneteller. A seer!

"Alright, let us head to Topaz." Klein gestured.

At that moment, he felt as though he should have worn a long black robe. He tried to keep his words to a minimum to accentuate the mystique of a seer.

Joyce Meyer locked the door behind him after entering the divination room. While he observed his surroundings, Klein seized the opportunity to tap his glabella twice and activated his Spirit Vision.

Joyce sat down and set his cane down beside him. He pulled on his black bow tie and said hoarsely, "Mr. Moretti, I wish for you to interpret my dream."

"Dream interpretation?" Klein acted as though it was within his expectations, but was merely asking for confirmation.

He saw that the colors representing Joyce's health were dull, but none of them signified an impending illness. The colors symbolizing his emotions were predominantly blue, and its darkness showed that he was obviously high strung.

Joyce nodded seriously.

"I have had the same horrific dream every night ever since the Alfalfa arrived at Enmat Harbor. I know that this could be associated with the trauma of the ordeal and that I should go see a psychiatrist, but I suspect that this is no ordinary dream. A normal dream would definitely have some details that are different even if they recur every night, but this dream is, at the very least, constant in the parts which I can recall."

"To a seer, these kinds of dreams are seen as revelations given by the divine," Klein said, half consoling and half explaining. "Can you describe the dream to me?"

Joyce clenched his fists and held it to his mouth. He thought deep for a moment before saying, "I dreamed that I was falling from the Alfalfa into the ocean. The ocean was dark red, as if it was filled with rotting blood.

"As I fell, I was grabbed by a person on the boat. I could not identify him, but I know that he was very strong.

"And I was also holding onto a person in an attempt to save him from falling into the sea. I know that person. He was a passenger of the Alfalfa, Younis Kim.

"Because of his weight and his struggling, I could not bear the weight and could only release my hands and watch him get devoured by the sea of blood.

"At that moment, the person above me also released his hand. I flailed my arms, hoping to grab onto something, but there was nothing. I could only plummet rapidly.

"Then I wake up in horror, sweat covering my back and forehead."

Klein held his forehead and gently rapped it as though he was thinking. He then organized his words and said, "Mr. Meyer, nightmares, similar nightmares, and repeated nightmares, these are all psychological problems and have a corresponding source. The same nightmare recurring time and time again is a reminder from your spirituality. It is also a revelation given to you by the divine."

Upon seeing Joyce appearing confused, he elaborated, "Do not have any doubt, an ordinary person's spirituality is also capable of giving reminders.

"I do not know what exactly happened on the Alfalfa, but I can see that it was a tragedy of blood and steel. It has left a deep trauma in you."

Seeing Joyce nod slightly, Klein continued, "You must have been very horrified, very fearful on the ship. It is easy for a person to lose their observational skills when overwhelmed by such intense emotions; thus missing signs that they should not have been missed. This does not mean that you have not seen those signs, but you have disregarded them, you understand? Disregarded.

"In your subconscious, in your spirituality, the details that you have missed are present all the same. If the thing that the detail is pointing toward is important enough, then your spirituality will remind you in the form of a dream."

Previously, I had similar case of disregarding a feeling, only to later realize that the diary was with Ray Bieber... But I was more sensitive and had stronger spirituality. I was also more knowledgeable about mysticism and thus could make a deduction more quickly... Klein paused for a few seconds and looked into Joyce Meyer's eyes.

"Did Mr. Younis Kim, who you let fall into the sea of blood, requested you of something on the boat, but was ultimately unable to escape his fate?"

Joyce fidgeted his body unnaturally. He opened his mouth several times before answering, "Yes, but I do not pity him. Perhaps a few days or a week from now, you will see in the newspapers how cruel and evil he was. He raped and murdered at least three ladies and tossed a baby into the Berserk Sea. He also led a bunch of savages who had lost their rationality and brutally massacred the passengers and crew of the boat.

"He was scheming, strong, and evil. I did not dare, nor could I stop him. I would only have forfeited my life."

"I am not doubting what you did," Klein said, making clear his stand. Then he explained, "But your dream is telling me that you are feeling regret and sorry. You believe that you should not have released

your hand back then. Since you believe that killing him was an act of justice, then why are you feeling regret and sorry for it, so much so that you have recurring dreams about you releasing your hand?"

"I don't know either..." Joyce shook his head, confused.

Klein crossed his hands and placed it under his chin. He attempted to analyze the situation.

"Incorporating what I just described, it seems you have missed certain details. For instance, anything that Younis Kim mentioned, his contents of his plea, the way he presented himself, et cetera. I cannot recall the incident for you, so please think about it carefully."

"There's nothing... All he could say back then was 'spare me, I surrender'..." Joyce muttered in puzzlement.

Klein did not know exactly what happened, so he could only guide him based on what he understood from the dream.

"Perhaps you felt that Younis Kim was more useful alive, that he could prove something or to explain something?"

Joyce knitted his brows. It was a while before he said, "Perhaps... I still find the conflict that arose on the Alfalfa happened too suddenly and turned intense too quickly. It was as if the passive evil in everyone's heart just erupted uncontrollably... It was too abnormal, very abnormal... Perhaps—perhaps I wished to interrogate Younis Kim why he acted as though he was

possessed by the devil in the first place..."

Klein suddenly had a stroke of inspiration after hearing Joyce's dreamy description. He spoke mysteriously with a tone unique to charlatan's.

"No, that's not the only reason." "What?" Joyce seemed shocked.

Klein crossed his hands and held his chin up. He stared straight into Joyce's eyes and said with a slow, yet forceful tone, "Not only did you find the matter abnormal, but you also saw some things that you disregarded. And putting together these things that you disregarded results in a terrifying conclusion.

"Your spirituality is telling you that there is someone who should be under the highest suspicion. And that person is the one who had grabbed you but ultimately released his hand in the dream. You do not suspect him subconsciously, and thus you are unable identify him. He is your partner. He once had control over your fate, or maybe, even saved you before!"

Joyce leaned back suddenly, slamming into the back of the chair with a dull thud.

His forehead slowly became laced with sweat, his eyes filled with confusion.

"I... I see it..."

Joyce suddenly stood up noisily, causing his chair to wobble and nearly fall.

"Mr. Tris..." He used all the energy in him to utter the name.

He was a friendly and bashful little boy with a round face. He was the hero that saved the survivors...

Klein did not interrupt Joyce's thoughts. He leaned back slightly and waited.

Joyce's expression changed several times, finally returning to normal, a normal that had a little paleness.

He revealed a rueful smile.

"I understand now. Thank you for interpreting my dream.

Perhaps it is time for me to make a trip to the police station." He took out his leather wallet and fished out a one-soli note.

"I do not think that money can fully represent your worth, and I can only give you the price you asked for. This is for you." Joyce pushed the note toward Klein.

I wouldn't have minded if you gave me ten pounds... One soli, you sure are like your fiancée... Klein kept up his mysterious vibe as a charlatan and said nothing, smiling as he pressed on the note.

Joyce took a deep breath, wore his hat, and turned to walk toward the door.

As he was unlocking the door, he suddenly turned back and said with sincerity, "Thank you, Master Moretti."

Master? Klein laughed to himself. He watched as Joyce left the divination room and said silently to himself, *Whatever happened on the Alfalfa seems extraordinary... If only the Captain was here. He would be able understand everything that happened in Joyce Meyer's dreams...*

...

Tuesday at dawn. Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey, who woke up earlier, beckoned her golden retriever Susie over. She said with a serious tone, "Susie, you are also a Beyonder now. We are the same kind, ew—no, what I mean is that we have to help each other. Guard the door later and don't let anyone disturb me. I have to conduct a ritual."

Susie looked at her mistress and shook her tail in exasperation.

After instructing her golden retriever, Susie, Audrey paced around, seemingly worried. She too was uncertain if the ritualistic magic would result in anything odd.

"Let's do this..." Her eyes turned calm as she used her state as a bystander to view the imagined process. Soon, she came to a new arrangement.

Audrey unlocked the door to her bedroom and said to Susie, "Susie, sit here. If Annie and the rest try to barge their way in, immediately go to the bathroom to inform me."

In order to prevent any accidents, her personal maidservant had the key to unlock her door.

Susie looked at her enigmatically and wagged her tail thrice.

"Very good. I will let you choose anything you want for lunch today!" Audrey pumped her fist gently.

After exhorting Susie, she entered the bathroom. The square bathtub was three to four meters on each side. There was clear water rippling gently in it with steam emitting from it. It was quite a dreamy sight.

Audrey tidied up a rectangular table with many bottles placed on it. Then, she went back out and moved candles, sacrificial items, and a white robe over.

Immediately after that, she closed the bathroom door.

With everything done, Audrey heaved a sigh of relief and picked up a translucent light-blue bottle beside the four candles.

The cylindrical bottle shimmered dreamily under the light. In it was the essence oils she had distilled from a mixture yesterday. As an enthusiast of mysticism, she had no lack of research regarding such items. She had many different kinds of extracts, flower essence, perfume, essential oils, and incense that she brewed herself at home. As such, she had already finished the initial preparations according to The Fool's instructions.

"Moon flowers, gold mint, slumber flowers, fingered citron, and rock-rose... What an odd concoction..." Audrey mumbled softly. "Oh, one has to cleanse one's body and calm their mind before engaging in ritualistic magic. This is a form of reverence to the divine—uh, to the target."

As she went through the entire process in her head, she placed the ritual's essential oil beside her bathtub. She reached out and began disrobing what she wore at home.

Pieces of her silk clothing fell into the laundry basket one after another. Audrey coiled up her hair into a bun and tested the water's temperature with her hand. Then, she carefully stepped into the bathtub, allowing her body to slowly sink into the water's warm embrace.

"Phew..." She exhaled comfortably, finding herself warm all over. She felt abnormally relaxed.

I don't even want to move a single finger... Audrey forcefully pumped herself out as she grabbed the translucent light-blue bottle beside her and dripped a few drops into the water.

A waft of fragrance dispersed, filling the silence with a refreshing smell. Audrey breathed in a few times and nodded in satisfaction.

"Not bad. It smells really good.

"How relaxing. How comfortable...

"I don't want to move at all. All I wish is to lie here in silence...

"Silence, in silence... si... lence..."

After losing her sense of time, Audrey suddenly heard barking.

She opened her eyes in shock, looking to her sides in a daze. She had no idea when Susie had opened the door and entered. She was squatting outside the bathtub, looking at her with an exasperated look.

As she rubbed the corners of her eyes, Audrey felt that the water had cooled down quite significantly.

I-I fell asleep? She subconsciously asked herself.

Susie looked at her without barking or wagging her tail.

"Haha, the effects of that bottle of ritual essential oil sure is great. Yeah, really great!" Audrey chuckled dryly as she explained with a cheerful tone.

She stood up, retrieved a towel, and as she wrapped and wiped her body, said to the golden retriever beside her, "Susie, continue keeping watch. Do not let Annie and the rest enter!"

Only when the golden retriever left did she secretly stick out her tongue. She threw her towel aside and wore a clean white robe.

After closing the door to the bathroom, Audrey recalled the ritual she had memorized.

She picked up four candles and placed them on the four corners of the table.

A loaf of white bread at the top left corner, a bowl of Feynapotter noodles at the top right corner. Smells great, but it's a little cold... No! It's not time to think of this! Paella at the bottom left corner and Desi pie at the bottom right... Audrey set up the altar according to The Fool's descriptions seriously, shaking her head twice during the process.

After she was done with the preparation, she left her four candles lit. She picked up a silver knife and stabbed it into a pile of coarse salt.

After narrating the sacred incantation in Hermes, Audrey raised the knife with beautiful patterns and placed it into a cup filled with clear water.

After focusing her mind, she pulled out the silver 'sacred blade,' cogitating her spirituality to spew out and spread from her blade.

Invisible energy spewed out as Audrey held the knife and circled the altar once. When she felt that a spirituality wall was fully erected around her, she expelled all the uncleanliness and distractions outside.

Maintaining her Spectator state, she prevented her excitement and joy from affecting the ritual.

She put down the silver knife and picked up the tiny light-blue crystalline bottle and dripped a drop on each candle.

Sizzle!

A faint fragrance emanated as Audrey's body, heart, and soul seemed to attain tranquility.

She drew a breath as she lowered her head in reverence and began chanting the incantation in Hermes.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era,

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog,

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck, "I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

"Moon flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Fingered citron, a herb that belongs to the sun, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

...

Right after Audrey chanted the incantation and hoped to cogitate the contents of her plea, she felt there was a stir within the spirituality wall. She saw a dark red star swirling on the back of her hand.

Her heart leaped as she hurriedly closed her eyes and calmed her heart to plead sincerely.

When everything was over, she surveyed her surroundings wondrously, but did not find anything odd.

"Is that all?" Audrey knitted her eyebrows slightly as she whispered.

...

The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck... The Fool that doesn't belong to this era... In the Blue Avenger's captain cabin, Alger Wilson in his windstorm robe was silently reciting the three lines of description he had heard in the afternoon. He seemed to be attempting to find clues of the person's identity through it.

He shook his head and stood up in a clearly vexed manner, but ultimately did not do anything.

Alger was not at ease inside the Blue Avenger, an ancient ship that was a relic from the Tudor Dynasty. Although he was already in control of the ship, he had a gut feeling that there were still many hidden secrets, just like the Blood Emperor.

Therefore, he planned on using the ship to test The Fool's powers but did not wish to attempt the unknown ritualistic magic on the ship.

Alger ruminated for a few minutes before leaving the captain's cabin and went on deck. He said to the few sailors, "We will be reaching the Rorsted Archipelago soon. We will be anchoring there for a day."

The sailors immediately cheered as they shouted in unison, "Thank you, My Lord!"

As the ghost ship did not need sailors, there were very few sailors on board. There was no need to worry about their supplies, being able to enjoy fresh food and clean water. However, day after day of voyaging at sea and the nearly unending vistas exhausted them both physically and mentally. It felt like they were always repressed and tolerating something until they lost control.

As for the Rorsted Archipelago, it was a famous colony on the Sonia Sea. Their business was booming, and they had all kinds of industries.

"I simply can't wait!" A crew member gyrated his hips and sniggered a meaningful laugh that all men would understand.

...

On the public carriage toward Zouteland Street, Klein, who was reading the newspapers leisurely, suddenly jolted. He seemed to hear an ethereal voice calling out to him.

Shapeless murmurs resounded in his mind as his forehead throbbed uncontrollably.

The contents of the calling that could not be heard left as fast as it came. In just ten seconds, it was gone. Klein pinched his forehead and resisted the throbbing pain deep in his brain.

Is this the murmurings of unknown existences that Old Neil mentioned? A result of having enhanced spiritual perception? Thoughts flashed through Klein's mind as he suddenly saw four black dots appear on the back of his right hand. They were like tiny inconspicuous moles.

The four black dots that stemmed from the luck enhancement ritual quickly sank, dimmed, and vanished.

Klein looked at it in surprise and had an additional guess about what had just happened.

Justice or The Hanged Man has attempted the ritualistic magic I gave them?

Was my train of thought right?

Those three descriptions have precisely pointed towards me through the mysterious space above the gray fog?

But I'm far from powerful enough. I can't hear the contents of their requests... I wonder if the information is 'stored' above the gray fog...

Yes, I should confirm it by entering tonight.

Klein felt a little perturbed and agitated. He quickly raised his newspaper and hid his face, preventing anyone from seeing the changes to his expression.

Soon, he arrived at Zouteland Street and entered the Blackthorn Security Company.

Before he could greet Rozanne, Klein saw Captain Dunn Smith walk out. He held a piece of paper with a portrait on it.

"Take a look at this internal warrant of arrest. A very cruel and vicious Beyonder has entered Tingen." Dressed in his black trench coat, the hatless Dunn swept his gaze over and handed the piece of paper in passing.

Klein received it and the first thing that entered his vision was a portrait sketch.

The sketch was of boy with a round face. He looked amiable with a tiny hint of bashfulness and was fairly young, probably about eighteen or nineteen years old.

"Tris, a suspected Beyonder. The initial estimate is that he's a Sequence 8 Instigator and we are not eliminating the possibility that the Theosophy Order is behind it. The culprit behind the massacre of the Alfalfa... According to a witness testimony, he came to Tingen after leaving Enmat Harbor. His current whereabouts are unknown..."

Tris... Alfalfa... It's actually a crime committed by a Beyonder? Klein suddenly recalled the dream interpretation from yesterday afternoon and Joyce Meyer's description. He immediately said, "Captain, I know one of the witnesses. He might very well be an important witness."

"I know. Joyce Meyer. My help was requested by the Machinery Hivemind last night. I saw you in Joyce's dream. Many details have led to the confirmation that the Alfalfa tragedy was a result of Tris." Dunn's gray eyes looked unperturbed as he chuckled.

How uninteresting. Captain... thankfully it was my rest day yesterday and not me acting as Seer during working hours... Klein lampooned. He barely missed the horror of being caught skiving by his direct superior.

He asked instead, "Which Sequence pathway is Instigator? What kind of organization is the Theosophy Order?"

Was instigating others to kill each other the method Tris used to eliminate the side effects of the potion or was it a requirement needed to advance?

Dunn thought for a few seconds and said, "Coincidentally, it's about time for you to learn the relevant information regarding Beyonders and the mysterious organizations. You shouldn't be ordered by Old Neil to keep reading the historical documents all the time."

Captain, wasn't the reason for recruiting me to be your 'history expert?' Klein did not dare point out the problem as he nodded seriously.

"Alright."

With a document signed by Dunn, Klein went underground and turned into the armory.

"Dunn is right. It's time you understand the different Beyonders and the various secret organizations." Dressed in a black classic robe, Old Neil read the note without finding it surprising. Instead, he supported the captain's decision.

He then added immediately with a smile, "After all, you will be heading to the underground market with me tomorrow night."

"Tomorrow night?" Klein did not conceal his pleasant surprise as he asked to confirm.

Old Neil nodded and said with a sigh, "I'm a person who can't sleep when in debt. I always wish to settle them as soon as I can."

You did not seem to act so previously. You left it to the last moment before using ritualistic magic to resolve the problem... So, I'm not the only one suffering from procrastination... Wait, is there a need to euphemize 'afraid to spend away the money to repay a loan?' Klein did not expose Old Neil and instead urged, "Mr. Neil, I'll be troubling you to retrieve the corresponding information from Chanis Gate."

There were mostly archaeological and historical documents in the armory. There were documents involving Beyonders and mysterious organizations, but few in number. Furthermore, they were mostly basic knowledge.

Old Neil slowly took a sip from his hand-ground coffee and smacked his lips. He then walked out the armory with the signed and stamped document. Klein watched the place on his behalf.

About ten minutes later, Old Neil returned with a huge stack of documents.

"They can only be read in here. They are not to be taken out," he warned as he placed the information on the desk.

"Alright." Klein gave a firm nod. He extended his hands and quickly flipped through the pages and did a general read through.

Very detailed... As expected of the Nighthawks's internal documents... As expected of a Church with four thousand years history or even more... Klein sighed inwardly as he glanced through the documents.

Not only did the documents introduce the various secret organizations, it also listed down many of the Sequence pathways. It was very complete. Some of them only wrote the potion name of the corresponding Sequence while others only described the Beyonder abilities of the corresponding Sequence. Some were completely missing and left blank.

While holding back his excitement, Klein found the Sequence pathway that led from Seer.

He ruffled through the pages and soon found a familiar word.

Then, his delighted expression quickly froze because there was no corresponding potion name—Sequences 7 and 8—after Seer!

Thankfully, the abilities of the two following Sequences are present... Klein silently exhaled as he calmed his mind and read the description seriously.

"Sequence 8: Potion name unknown. The corresponding

Beyonder is good at fighting with artifice and very crafty."

Good at fighting with artifice? This is the next advancement of Seer? Why does it feel odd... I'm not a hunter... Am I going to become a melee mage? What does crafty mean? My intelligence is enhanced,

making me good at fooling the enemy? Klein was stunned. He even suspected that the Nighthawks's information was wrong.

There were corresponding case studies appended, but he could not find a reasonable explanation despite reading it repeatedly.

He cast his gaze lower as the description of Sequence 7 entered his eyes.

"Potion name unknown. The corresponding Beyonder is good at many spells that can be quickly cast. Fuses one's body's skill and supernatural powers as one.

That's more like it! This is what an advancement of a Seer should sound like! Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

After seeing the case studies of Sequence 7, he cast his eyes to the overall description of the pathway.

"This Sequence pathway was first established by the Solomon Empire's Zaratul family. During the conflicts of the Fourth Epoch, the family was not fully destroyed. The family's name was occasionally heard in the history of the Fifth Epoch... It is suspected to be connected to the ancient organization, the Secret Order."

Zaratul? Upon seeing this name, Klein's eyes constricted.

He had just seen this name appear in the remnant diary pages of Emperor Roselle yesterday afternoon!

Roselle's acting came from a reminder by the mysterious figure known as Zaratul!

Because of that mysterious Zaratul, Emperor Roselle regretted not choosing Seer? Therefore, I was indirectly influenced, turning me into a Seer. It makes acting return to the embrace of the Seer... It feels like it was all predestined. Klein knitted his brows and felt that things were somewhat different.

Just from the logical chain, he did not feel that there was anything wrong in any aspect. However, in the domain of mysticism, pre-destiny often manifested things and involved new problems.

In addition, transmigration is quite a baffling matter... It's just confusing... And the guy I've possessed tried to commit suicide because of the lost notebook of the Secret Order... Klein thought for quite a while and had many guesses, but lacked the information needed to prove them.

Phew... After repeatedly reading the information, he finally suppressed his ideas and read the other records.

He first found the Sailor Sequence and discovered that it indeed belonged to the Lord of Storms.

For an old opponent that they haven't faced for perhaps more than two to three thousand years, the Nighthawks's internal records were rather detailed.

"Sequence 8: Folk of Rage. Ancient name—Guardian of the Storm. The corresponding Beyonder can release several strikes that exceed ordinary thresholds when enraged. Their strength and speed are greatly enhanced... Facing them is like facing a storm...

"Sequence 7: Seafarer. Ancient name—Storm Priest. The corresponding Beyonder is also a scholar of astronomy and geography. They have an intuitive grasp of magnetic fields, ocean currents, wind direction, and clouds... A boat with a Seafarer will never get lost at sea... They are even more beloved by the oceans and gain enhancements in every aspect at sea...

"They are friends of water. They can act freely underwater for more than half an hour... They can cast a limited number of water-related spells. Some are a result of their own capabilities and some are a bestowment from the Lord of Storms, for example..."

A Sequence 7 Seafarer is very powerful... Klein nodded while in deep thought.

He suspected that The Hanged Man was a Guardian of the Storm, if not a Seafarer. From how he has recently advanced, it was more likely he was the latter.

This also indicated in a way that The Hanged Man was either a member of the Mandated Punisher or a pirate who had been secretly absorbed by the Church of Storms.

Impressive. Impressive... Klein flipped back a few pages and found the advancement of Spectator. He discovered that the description was identical to what The Hanged Man had said.

Sequence 9 Spectator was like a Seer. They lacked direct combat means and could only observe a target to obtain information, gleaning the true thoughts of the target. By doing so, they could provide subtle influences and guidance to cause situations to develop in a way they wish.

Sequence 8 Telepathist was the advancement of Spectator. Their observation was not only limited to superficial details, but deeper into one's aura, Ether Body, or other mysterious domains. The combination of the two allowed a Telepathist to precisely understand a person's thoughts as though they could read their minds. In front of them, it was difficult to have any secrets.

Sequence 7's Psychiatrist, which was also known as Psyche Analyst, had further enhancements above the Sequence 8 foundations. They could begin directly influencing a target. For instance, they could treat a target's maniacal problems or alternatively, cause them to turn maniacal and lose their reason.

"A Beyonder that is very difficult to be noticed..." After reading the description, Klein made a reasoned judgment.

After understanding the relevant information concerning the Gathering members, he flipped to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. This was because Emperor Roselle had chosen their Savant Sequence.

"Sequence 9: Savant. The corresponding Beyonder believes that knowledge is power. They have a rough understanding of the supernatural, but are more knowledgeable about aqua regia, nitroglycerin, and complicated bolts and gears. They seem to know everything."

It is no wonder that Emperor Roselle said that this potion suited him perfectly, allowing for him to press his advantage to the fullest... Klein understood completely as he shifted his eyes down.

After several case studies, the corresponding Sequence 8 finally appeared in Klein's vision.

"Archaeologist. They possess a good deal of knowledge about history and outdoor survival, as well as forbidden knowledge about ruins. They have a strong enough body and ability to face everything..."

"Sequence 7: Appraiser. They can intuitively understand the powers and problems of most extraordinary items, and can use them while keeping danger at its lowest..."

As Klein's security clearance was insufficient, he only had access to Sequence pathways up to 7. It left him a little frustrated, but there was no other way around it. He only wished that Backlund would quickly send over the Sealed Artifact 2-049 to determine if Ray Bieber was a descendant of the Antigonus family.

That way, he would have a chance of becoming a formal member and obtain a higher security clearance.

Collecting himself, Klein read the material seriously from cover to cover. He knew that the sequences following Corpse Collector were Gravedigger and Spirit Medium. He also knew that there was no information about the Sequence 8 of the Mystery Pryer path. Not only was there no name for the potion, but even the description had been left blank. There was a name for Sequence 7 of that path: Warlock!

Sounds impressive... Klein slowly flipped the page and saw Apprentice and Marauder which Emperor Roselle had lingering thoughts for. Their records only reached Sequence 8 and nothing more.

"Sequence 9: Apprentice. Their abilities are rather strange. It can only be confirmed that this is the originating pathway of a mage. They are rarely trapped and very difficult to be stopped. They often are able to escape and pass through obstacles every time...

“Sequence 8: Trickmaster. They wield all kinds of strange but impotent spells...”

“Sequence 9: Marauder. Difficult to separate these Beyonders from ordinary bandits or thieves. Perhaps the means available to them are more impressive, but their goal of stealing riches is not for enjoyment or survival. It’s more like answering a calling...”

“Sequence 8: Swindler. We have also discovered traces of Beyonders in fraud investigations. They gain enjoyment from swindling...”

Gain enjoyment from swindling... This is ‘acting’ in a different form, isn’t it? If I had the choice, I might have chosen Apprentice... Klein silently said to himself. Suddenly, he discovered the corresponding Sequence potion of the culprit of the Alfalfa tragedy, Tris—Instigator.

"Sequence 8: Instigator. They are adept at triggering the evil desires deep in people's hearts, causing contradictions and inciting conflict, thus resulting in bloody massacres..."

The description isn't detailed enough. From the looks of it, the Nighthawks do not understand the capabilities of this potion well enough... But it does match the characteristics of the Alfalfa tragedy... Klein cast his gaze up and read the corresponding Sequence 9 for Instigator.

"Sequence 9: Assassin. Can transform their bodies in a short period of time and become light as a feather. They can also utilize vision equal to that of an eagle. Every Assassin is adept at hiding in the shadows. They have dexterous steps and have the ability to release all their strength in one blow..."

After reading the description, Klein was left completely confused. *Assassin... The advancement from*

Assassin is Instigator?

This advancement is just as odd as how a Seer advances to a class that is good at fighting with artifice...

Some Sequence pathways advance in a very ordinary fashion, such as Spectator. Yet, there are Sequence pathways that seem to violate intuition and logic?

Well, that might not be completely true. Perhaps I just haven't discovered some of the hidden common points...

For instance, Assassins and Instigators can both bring catastrophe to others...

But I can't figure out the advancement of Seer! Hey! Could it be of the Gandalf [1] *lineage? After adding some supportive magic, the other attribute points are dumped into strength and techniques?*

As Klein lampooned in a speechless manner, he silently shook his head. He flipped to the section about the secret organization, the Theosophy Order that involved Instigators.

"Theosophy Order. A secret organization that appeared in the Fifth Epoch, which is the early era of the current epoch. They believe that the mind is fundamental to a person, while the physical flesh is a cage that restrains the mind. The reason why humans do evil is a result of the physical body's influence. One has to use their spirituality to obtain knowledge, allowing the mind to gradually extricate from the body. Then, through the trials of the stars, they will eventually be separated from the material world, returning to the purest and truest self, obtaining eternal redemption."

"Therefore, many extremist members of the Theosophy Order will make destroying the bodies of others their goal, which has led to many bloody massacres... It is obvious that they possess two Sequence pathways. The first is the more common Apprentice and Trickmaster potions among their members. The other Sequence comprised of Assassin and Instigator rarely appear... There is currently no evidence that indicates that the Theosophy Order possesses Sequence 7 or higher potions.

"It is unknown how the Theosophy Order established itself. Their possible origins can only be analyzed using the two Sequence pathways. Firstly, the Apprentice and Trickmaster Sequences easily remind people of the Abraham family of the Tudor Dynasty in the Fourth Epoch. The Tamara family, tied to the Abraham family through marriage for extended periods of time, cannot be eliminated as well. Secondly, Assassin and Instigator point towards the Demoness Sect."

The Abraham, Tamara, Antigonus and Zaratul families, the Solomon Empire's Black Emperor, the Tudor Dynasty's Blood Emperor, the Trunsoest Empire, and the Jacob and Amon families that the Hanged Man had mentioned... There are really lots of secrets buried in the history of the Fourth Epoch.

There might be a lot of facts too... Klein was astounded from what he read. He had a deep appreciation for how the history of the Fourth Epoch was clouded in fog.

The outline he could see through the fog left him shuddering involuntarily. It was as though he could imagine a thriving era of Beyonders, an Epoch with blood and strangeness in a concerted dance or horror and distortion in a symphony.

Klein drew in a silent gasp and flipped through the book, but did not discover any corresponding descriptions of the Demoness Sect.

He looked up and saw Old Neil wrestling with some filter paper with his hand-ground coffee. He asked sincerely, "Mr. Neil, what organization is the Demoness Sect? I can't find any introduction about them in the documents."

Old Neil was in no hurry to respond. After wrestling with his coffee, he chuckled and said, "Your security clearance isn't high enough. Even with Dunn's permission, you would not be able to read the relevant information. It can also be said that a lot of the information is only available in the Holy Cathedral and isn't stored behind Tingen City's Chanis Gate. Perhaps wait till the day you become a captain of the Nighthawks. You would be sent to the Holy Cathedral for training and would then be able to access them.

"I do not understand much about the Demoness Sect. All I know is that they worship the Primordial Demoness. They believe that this secret existence is the true inheritor of the Creator. She was born out of the Chaos and was the earliest to be born from the Creator's body. She is also the ultimate Ender that ends everything.

"Their Sequence pathways are related to this because to obtain the favor of the Primordial Demoness and to approach this secret existence, the upper echelons are all female. This is also why they are called the Demoness Sect.

"Anything else is not something a formal member like me will know. I've heard that the demonesses make it their mission to spread catastrophes."

Spread catastrophes... This does match the hidden commonality of Assassin and Instigator... But this Mr. Tris's future seems bleak. The subsequent potions seem to be more suited for females... Klein's nodded slightly before he continued reading the information.

After he finished reading, he realized that the secret organizations were a lot more than he imagined. But on second thought, he found it very ordinary. After all, this world had so many years of history underlying it. There was once an era when Beyonder powers were extremely active.

According to the provided information, Klein categorized the secret organizations into three based on era.

First were the ancient organizations born in the Fourth Epoch. They included but were not limited to the Moses Ascetic Order, Secret Order, and the Blood Sanctify Sect which were followers of the Devil. However, the information only mentioned the Demoness Sect once.

The second was the secret organizations early in the Fifth Epoch, the present Epoch. For instance, the Theosophy Order or the Death-worshiping Numinous Episcopate. There is also the Life School of Thought which employs a master-apprentice heritage and the Rose School of Thought known among Beyonders for its bloody sacrifices.

The third category were new organizations that appeared in the recent century or two. They include the Aurora Order, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, the Element Dawn, and the Psychology Alchemists, which Klein learned about much earlier.

Apart from them, there were other organizations that did not do anything major.

“Benson and Melissa must have never imagined that the world is so dangerous... it’s not only limited to wars...” Klein shook his head with a wry smile. He stacked the classified documents neatly before pushing it to Old Neil.

Meanwhile, he added silently in his heart.

Please don’t let my Tarot Club be on the list...

Old Neil never suspected that a leader of a secret organization was sitting opposite to him. He chuckled and took the documents and headed to Chanis Gate.

Klein sat there and wondered if he should divine the location of Instigator Tris. But he abandoned the thought after less than twenty seconds. After all, he only had a vague idea of Tris’s appearance and did not know if the name was genuine. If he could figure out his location with that, he would not be a Seer, but a Prophet!

By the time Old Neil returned, Klein had straightened his thought processes and continued his revision of mysticism studies to grasp even more forms of ritualistic magic.

He spent the day studying and revising. He did not participate in the joint operation needed for capturing Instigator Tris. He did hear that the delivery of Sealed Artifact 2-049 from Backlund had been delayed due to some reason or another. The actual time of arrival was still pending.

As he had earned nearly two soli from yesterday’s divination, Klein spent ten pence to buy a two-liter barrel of Enmat Beer for Benson on the way home. He also bought some lemon cakes fresh out of the oven for Melissa.

“Klein, I know you care for us deeply, but there’s no need. There’s no need to keep spending money on such matters,” said Benson after he saw the tiny barrel of beer and deliberating over his words.

Melissa stood beside him and nodded slightly.

This is probably how our consumerist habits differ... Klein sighed in amusement.

“Benson, Melissa, don’t worry. This was bought with my additional reimbursement. Yeah, I earn an additional two to four soli every week.”

I can’t tell them that these are the earnings I got from doing divinations for others, right... He added inwardly.

“...That job of yours is much better than I imagined.” Benson was taken aback as he made an objective assessment.

That’s right. I even learned divination from it... Klein mused silently before turning toward the kitchen.

Under the combined efforts of the trio of siblings, a sumptuous dinner was ready for eating.

After having their fill, Klein, Benson, and Melissa lay slumped in the living hall. It took them quite a while before they got up to clean up, chat, and study.

When Benson and Melissa fall asleep, I’ll head above the gray fog to see the effects of the ritual... As Klein revised his history textbooks, he shot a glance at his siblings.

...

West Borough. Iron Cross Street Lower Street.

A three-storied apartment was immersed in darkness. There were no street lamps or any additional light.

Suddenly, a figure leaped out of a window from the third floor. It landed gently on the ground like a feather without causing so much as a stir.

His body crouched and suddenly vanished as though he had blended into the shadows. All that could be seen was the outline of his body.

As he traveled quickly, the figure arrived at the harbor. He headed for a corner devoid of anything except for a pile of goods.

He seriously observed for a moment, circling the area twice before the leaving the darkness and entering the corner.

One could see his round and amiable face. He was Instigator Tris, who had single handedly caused the tragedy of the Alfalfa.

“How does it feel?” A mysterious figure wearing a black hooded robe walked out of the shadows. The hoarse voice obviously belonged to a woman.

Tris revealed a friendly and satisfied smile.

“Feels great. It was a scene I dreamed and yearned for.

“I think I have appropriately completed the mission and have taken the necessary preparations for the advancement.”

The black-robed woman nodded indiscernibly and said, “Very well. According to the promise, I’ll hand you the Sequence 7 formula and the three main ingredients. You will have to gather the rest by yourself.”

“No problem.” Tris answered, seemingly prepared.

The mysterious woman raised her hand and handed a book-like object to Tris.

The “book” had an ancient and mottled bronze exterior cover with a strange star-shaped lock on its side.

Tris knew that inside the “book” was the formula and ingredients. He instantly became thrilled.

He tried hard to compose himself as he looked curiously at the potion’s name on the bronze outer cover.

“Witch!”

Tris exclaimed. He found it unbelievable that the word written in ancient Hermes was “Witch.”

Witch? I’ll advance to become a Witch? What a joke!

The mysterious woman covered her mouth and let out a chortle. It took her quite some time before she answered, “Weren’t you always curious? Curious about why our upper echelons are all female...

“That is the answer.”

---

1. Gandalf is a fictional character, a wizard and one of the protagonists in J. R. R. Tolkien’s novels The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings.

CHAPTER 67: RESPONSE

The crimson moon high in the sky hung silently in the darkness. It illuminated Tingen City, the city of universities, as it gradually fell silent.

Klein stood in front of his desk and looked through his oriel windows to see the empty Daffodil Street. He heard the sound of carriages quickly galloping far away without causing a din.

He picked up his vine-leaf patterned silver pocket watch and snapped it open. He took a glance at it and drew the curtains, making the yellowish lights of the gas lamp reflect back into the bedroom.

Klein turned around at an adequate speed, locked his room, and switched off the gas valve.

The room was immediately covered in darkness. Only a sliver of red moonlight penetrated the curtains. It gave rise to an atmosphere perfect for many late-night folk tales.

Klein took out the silver knife he had applied for. He imagined the spherical light and entered a half-Cogitation state.

He focused his mind according to his previous practice, allowing his spirituality to spew out from the tip of his blade. Then, he allowed their motion to miraculously fuse with his surroundings, sealing off the room.

He was doing it to prevent any abnormal stirrings that could wake Benson and Melissa.

Following that, Klein put down the knife and walked four steps in a counterclockwise manner. Every step was accompanied by the incantation from Earth.

The unchanging roars and murmurs inundated him. With the same mania and pain inflicted on him, he did his best to control himself and withstood the most grueling and dangerous stage in his half-conscious state.

The grayish-white fog was endless. The dark red stars were at varying distances from him. The towering divine palace stood erect like a dead giant. Nothing seemed to have changed. The silence and antiquity that had accumulated over thousands of years swarmed him.

No, there is a change! Klein silently muttered to himself. His gaze locked onto a dark red star near him.

That was the star symbolizing Justice!

The star's deep redness began to pulse. It did so with average amplitude, but did not stop.

Klein carefully spread out his spirituality towards the deep redness.

The moment the two made contact, he felt a hum in his head. He saw a blurry and distorted scene and heard the illusory but stacked voice of prayers.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck; "I pray for your help.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

...

"I pray for you to give me a good dream.

...

“I pray for you to give me a good dream.”

...

The female voice resounded constantly in an intermittent fashion. Klein’s psyche turned more irritable and chaotic. It was akin to listening to someone upstairs pounding on the floor when he had just fallen asleep.

He repressed his emotions and used Cogitation to calm the urge. He carefully discerned the blurry scene that appeared before him.

It was a girl dressed in white robes. She had a head of beautiful golden hair. She was standing before four flickering flames, her head lowered as she kept chanting.

From the distorted image, Klein barely recognized her to be Miss Justice!

At this point, he confirmed that the ritual incantation he had created could precisely point towards the gray fog, towards him!

This gave him a huge sense of achievement, going from nothing to having something.

I won’t praise myself for being awesome... Klein’s mood turned for the better. He felt that the pleading voice that echoed in his ears like a buzzing fly was now acceptable.

With a thought, he attempted to create a response in his mind, transferring it through the intricate connection to the dark red star. “I’m aware.”

...

The gray layer emanated before him. A distorted and blurry figure stood in the deepest depths.

The spot where his eyes ought to be swirled with deep redness as his voice resounded repeatedly in the vast and empty world.

“I’m aware.”

“I’m aware.”

“I’m aware.”

...

Audrey Hall was jolted awake suddenly. She sat up with her blanket wrapped around her as her mind was fully occupied with the scenes she saw in her dream.

She knew very well that she had dreamed of the Fool, the mysterious being that lived above the fog!

“Is this a response to my morning prayers?” Audrey, who quickly entered her Spectator state, calmed down and analyzed.

Although she did not understand why The Fool did not respond on the spot and only did so at night, she was still shocked that the ritualistic magic was effective with the few lines of incantation.

In the past, she had prayed to the Evernight Goddess, but had never received any response!

Even if Mr. Fool was not a god, he is likely not far from being one... Audrey slowly inhaled before slowly exhaling.

Since he was a powerful existence that she had no means of resisting, she quickly threw aside her worries. She began considering what to do next.

“First, I have to completely digest the Spectator potion... My acting is still pretty good.

“Second, I have to seek out the Psychology Alchemists.

“Third, I should try to obtain the Telepathist potion formula from Mr. Fool or clues regarding the Psychology Alchemists elsewhere.

“However, every godlike existence should have a complete Sequence pathway that belongs to them. They might not know the formulas of other Sequence pathways... A new Beyonder organization like the Psychology Alchemists might not be able to garner Mr. Fool’s attention...”

...

With the connection severed, Klein sat at the bronze table’s seat of honor in a rather good mood.

He was completely covered in gray fog. He leaned back and clenched his fist to cover his mouth. He recalled and analyzed the process.

At that moment, he was the only living being in the world of the gray fog. Apart from that, there was absolute silence.

It seems I can only pass information over and am unable to use the powers in here... From the looks of it, my idea of manipulation would not work. Klein kept prodding his mouth as he silently made a conclusion.

He had originally planned on attempting to bind his body with the world of the gray fog in the same manner if the incantation and ritual proved effective. As such, he could then leverage all the power of this mysterious space.

If that happened, he could pray to himself, and through such a manipulative manner, he could go around the limitations, the mysteries, and the danger, allowing him to fully use the gray fog world.

For example, he could first conduct a ritual and pray to “himself” for spells. Following that, he could come above the gray fog and answer his own request and bestow it.

From the looks of it, I was being too idealistic... My understanding and control of the gray fog world has not reached that level... Klein shook his head in a self-deprecating manner and planned on leaving.

At that moment, he saw the dark red star that represented the Hanged Man begin to pulse. He heard an ethereal and formless voice spread out.

“I coincidentally chanced upon The Hanged Man’s ritual?” Klein nodded in thought.

He sat at the seat of honor of the long bronze table and extended his hand to tap on the star.

His spirituality spread as it touched the pulsing deep redness.

He heard The Hanged Man’s heavy and repeated prayers along with a blurry scene.

The Hanged Man was draped in a pure-black robe in the scene. He stood in front of four plumes of fire. The surrounding spirituality had formed a wall, isolating him from any external influence.

Klein did not immediately respond. All he did was watch and listen silently.

“...You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck; “I pray for your help.”

...

After The Hanged Man finished his prayer, he waited for a while. Seeing that there was no response, he began dismantling the spirituality wall, extinguished the candles, and tidied up the altar.

Finally, he swiped his extended hand as aqueous light spread out, making the altar table look brand new.

Water-based spell... The bestowment of the Storm... The Hanged Man is indeed at least a Seafarer... Klein nodded slightly. Before the scene vanished, he responded via the method he imagined, transmitting it through the blob of dark redness.

...

Alger Wilson was situated in the Rorsted Archipelago's City of Generosity.

He had not gone with the sailors to the famous Red Cabaret. Instead, he stayed inside the hotel and sealed the door and windows shut to attempt the ritual The Fool had described.

After familiarly finishing the prayer, Alger waited patiently for a moment, but did not receive any response.

"It seems this attempt isn't too successful... Mr. Fool needs to change methods..." He was both overjoyed, but also a little disappointed.

After everything was done, Alger planned on going downstairs for a bottle of Lanti Proof—alcohol that could aid a Folk of Rage to unleash his powers. Mandated Punishers of the Lord of Storms were rather fond of this sort of beverage.

Pulling open the door, Alger was about to walk out when his vision blurred. He saw gray fog billow in the corridor and a hazy human figure sitting in the deepest depths of the fog, as if on a high throne.

"I'm aware." The familiar deep voice reverberated around Alger's ears, causing him to freeze where he stood as his head slightly throbbed in pain.

Alger's eyes suddenly turned dark. He looked around but realized that nothing had changed. There was still the same squeaky floorboard, the same aged wall candle stands, and the same unclean corridor.

I'm aware... The voice was still resounding by Alger's ears.

His expression sank as he hit his chest lightly with his fist but did not say any words of respect to the Lord of Storms.

After a long silence, Alger's expression was restored to normal, but his gaze seemed deeper.

...

Klein did not spend too much time above the gray fog. When all the remnant voices returned to normal, he enveloped himself in his spirituality and plunged into the gray fog, plummeting into the material world.

The lights before him flew by rapidly, like the scenes of a movie played back at a speed tens of times faster than normal. After Klein felt faint, he saw curtains that let crimson moonlight through along with the blurry outlines of the desk and bookshelf.

He picked up the silver knife again and removed the spirituality wall in the room. Then, a sudden gust of wind opened the door and went through the corridor.

He was completely relieved when he saw that there were no stirrings from Benson's or Melissa's room.

This luck enhancement ritual is really indispensable for traveling [1]*... It's concealed and mystical...* Klein silently murmured and closed the door again, walking towards his bed.

His mission tomorrow was to head to the underground markets for Beyonder items with Old Neil.

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1. This is a Chinese meme that originated from Stephen Chow's movie, "Flirting Scholar."

   The exact scene: https://youtu.be/Vg_HBVOvVWk?t=4440

CHAPTER 68: MONSTER

At dusk, the setting sun cast long shadows of the carriages and horses.

Having informed Benson and Melissa that he was having dinner at the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein headed to the harbor with Old Neil on a public carriage.

He was dressed in cheap formal attire, afraid that conflict might break out in such a complicated location—if he damaged his tuxedo which he took painstaking care of, he would probably cry his heart out.

When the sunlight appeared to turn fiery, the carriage stopped. Old Neil, in his usual classic black robe and felt black hat with a rounded edge, ignored the gazes of others and walked diagonally to the Evil Dragon Bar ahead of them.

Even though the bar was slightly far away and the heavy doors were tightly shut, Klein still heard wave after wave of rapturous shouts. They appeared to be cheering on a hero.

When he came close, he suddenly sensed something. He turned his head towards the warehouse opposite to the bar. He saw a stocky man dressed in a uniform standing at a hidden corner on the rooftop.

The man carried a huge grayish-white mechanical box and held a thick rifle in his hand.

The grayish-white mechanical box was obviously connected to the same-colored rifle via piping.

"Steam-pressured rifle?" Klein muttered in shock. He looked at Old Neil and said, "This bar can actually obtain such weapons?" That was a military-controlled item!

Although it used extracted phlogiston [1], the size and weight of the steam backpack were still shocking, something only a true warrior of blood and iron could withstand. The rifle had an extremely high muzzle velocity and shocking destructive power too.

Matched with a suitable scope, it was nearly equivalent to an inferior sniper rifle.

"What?" Old Neil squinted his eyes as he looked over, having a confused look too. "Did something happen here?"

Something happened? Klein surveyed his surroundings and discovered a few more men holding repeating rifles who were searching for something.

"What happened?" Old Neil approached the bar and asked the brawny man guarding its door outside.

The brawny man obviously knew Old Neil and smiled wryly.

"The bar was nearly destroyed earlier.

"Apparently a wanted man was here trying to buy materials and was recognized. And this was what resulted from it. Oh Lord, what did he do, and how dangerous was he to receive such treatment? My legs went limp seeing all those firearms, limper than after spending an entire night with Ginger Sunny!"

He did not know the identity of the wanted man, much less know that the people who came to buy materials had Beyonders mixed in.

"Wanted man? Do you know his name?" Old Neil asked in interest.

"I think it was Tris or something?" the brawny man answered uncertainly.

Instigator Tris? Klein nodded in enlightenment, having understood what was happening.

Tris did not know that Joyce Meyer had cast his suspicion on him; therefore, he had sauntered right into the market to purchase materials without heed. He was likely recognized by an informant of either the Machinery Hivemind or the Nighthawks, resulting in an intense clash.

“Was he caught?” Klein tapped his silver-inlaid black cane.

Based on the surrounding situation, likely not...

The brawny man shook his head slightly and gestured with his chin to the rooftop of the warehouse opposite him.

“He rushed out before those terrifying guys arrived. Bloody hell, I’ve never seen a man run faster than he did!”

You haven’t seen the true skills of an Assassin, or you might be taken away to some indescribable place for further reeducation... Klein thought.

“Is the market still open?” Old Neil changed subjects and asked.

“It just restored operations,” replied the brawny man affirmatively.

“That’s great.” Old Neil quickened his pace and extended his right hand, pushing open the heavy door.

Klein followed closely in tow and walked in. He nearly fainted at the stuffiness and smell of alcohol that inundated him.

In the middle of Evil Dragon Bar was a boxing ring. Two halfnaked men were in an intense brawl and surrounding them were dozens of customers shouting and cheering on the side they supported with no lack of vulgarities.

Old Neil ignored them and led Klein around the boxing ring and walked into a billiard room at the back.

In the billiard room, there were two people holding cue sticks, having a casual conversation. When they saw Old Neil enter, they instantly fell silent for a few seconds.

After confirming the visitor’s identity, they moved aside and let Old Neil and Klein pass through the secret door behind them.

After passing through a few rooms, the sight before Klein’s eyes opened up. He saw a place that was about the size of a lecture hall from his previous life.

Some vendors had set up roadside stalls with bottles and cans all over. Passers-by strolled through them, either scrutinizing their goods, chatting, or comparing prices.

“They have to give five percent of their profits to Swain. Ah, he is the boss of Evil Dragon Bar, former captain of a Mandated Punisher squad and older than I am. He’s someone who wishes to drink himself to his death,” Old Neil explained in a garrulous manner.

Klein thought and gave an honest evaluation.

“A rather profitable business.”

After all, his only expense was providing the venue and protection.

“If any item catches your fancy but you lack the money, you can borrow from Swain. But of course, he charges a very high interest...” Old Neil trailed off as he gnashed his teeth.

As expected, it’s like running a casino, they would provide usuries... Klein held his walking stick and looked around as he asked curiously, “Mr. Swain is a Seafarer?”

The captain of a Mandated Punisher squad was likely a Sequence

7.

“No, he is only a Folk of Rage. Tingen is not a coastal city, so the Church of the Goddess is much more powerful than the Lord of Storms here.” Old Neil scoffed. “Actually, Swain had the chance of becoming a Seafarer, but was afraid that he would lose control so he chose to give up.”

Just as Klein was about to ask if the boss of the bar had any experience of nearly losing control, he suddenly felt a strange phenomenon happen on his left.

There appeared to be something hidden there, muttering and recounting.

Klein turned his head and saw a pale young man. He was wearing an old linen shirt and blue jeans that the working class normally wore. His eyes looked demoralized with a hint of craziness, and he was constantly mumbling.

“His spiritual perception is very high... or perhaps, distorted?” Klein creased his eyebrows and muttered.

It was the young man’s spiritual perception that triggered his own spiritual perception!

Generally speaking, spiritual perception sensing something causes some interaction. It was nearly impossible to conceal it from others, but “others” referred to Spirit Mediums who had cast their abilities, as well as powerful figures with similar special traits. A Beyonder like Klein would actually find it hard to detect, only detecting if one’s spiritual perception reached a certain heightened level, or an abnormal distortion happened.

They made eye contact and the pale young man with messy black hair walked towards him with an expression looking as though he was half-sleepwalking and half-insane.

He stopped before Klein and stared at him.

Suddenly, he guffawed.

“Haha, it’s the smell of death, death... Ah!”

Before he was done talking, he suddenly screamed tragically. His eyes shut tightly as liquid with the color of blood flowed out.

“Ah! Darn it!” The young man covered his eyes and hugged his head. He struggled on the ground and only calmed down after a while. He then lay there panting.

During the entire process, not a single customer or stall vendor looked over.

Klein pressed down his halved top hat and looked at Old Neil. Klein’s mouth was hanging open in shock, using his actions to demonstrate his shock and to request for advice.

“Don’t mind him. He’s Ademisaul, an orphan, nicknamed ‘monster.’ He was born with high spiritual perception, and he has always been able to see things that he shouldn’t, hear voices that he shouldn’t. Hence, he is always raving and often getting hurt.” Old Neil shook his head as he explained.

He could tell that my body was once dead? Klein knitted his eyebrows and lowered his voice as he asked in doubt, “Haven’t the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind ever thought of taking him in?”

“No, we do not have the Sequence potion that suits him,” said Old Neil with a sigh.

Right, he was born with the starting point of half a Sequence... Klein asked again curiously,

“What Sequence pathway suits him?”

“The Sequence 9 that suits him is called ‘Monster.’ His nickname came from there. It’s a pity that only the Life School of Thought has control over the Sequence pathway’s beginning,” Old Neil replied softly.

He tried to keep the conversation between him and Klein from the people around them to avoid leaking information to mysticism enthusiasts.

Life School of Thought? Klein recalled the information he had previously read.

The secret organization appeared in the beginning of the current epoch. Its actual origins were unknown, but it was mainly passed down via master and apprentice.

Their theories and beliefs were hardly known. Klein only knew that they separated the world into three layers: the world of absolute rationality, also known as the absolute truth world, the world of the spirit, and the material world.

Rumor had it that the secret organization had once produced a Soothsayer... Wasn't that a Sequence pathway that corresponded to Seer? Confusing, really confusing... Klein shook his head and saw Ademisaul struggle to get up and then wander off to another corner.

He reorganized his thoughts and followed behind Old Neil. They walked past one stall after another. There were plants like moon flower, fingered citron, night vanilla, and mineral resources like silver, topaz, ruby and so on.

"It's really very well equipped..." Klein muttered softly.

The mysticism enthusiasts of all ages and genders around him would be stopping, distinguishing, or talking at times. It gave the area a bustling vibe.

"Walk around on your own. I am going to settle my bill." Old Neil pointed at one of the two rooms at the end.

"Alright." Klein nodded without thought.

He strolled with his black cane and came before a stall which sold self-made amulets. He took a careful look at it for a while.

Just when Klein prepared to speak with the seller, he suddenly heard someone asking the stall behind him, "Is this powder ground from cow teeth paeonol?"

Cow teeth paeonol? Isn't that one of the supplementary ingredients of the Spectator potion? Klein thought, then turned around to look at the inquirer.

Justice had repeated the formula for the potion several times, so Klein had been left with a remarkably clear impression of the ingredients.

---

1. A substance supposed by 18th-century chemists to exist in all combustible bodies, and to be released in combustion.

Klein looked over and saw the person inquiring about the cow teeth paeonol.

The man was less than a meter away from him. He was wearing a black suit and a halved top hat of the same color. He had a cane adorned with silver in his hand and a pair of gold-framed spectacles on his face. He had a refined bearing.

"Yes, do you need it? This can here costs three soli." The owner of the stall was wearing a long black robe, one filled mysticism traits.

The inquirer whose sideburns were pale yellow thought for a moment before saying, "Can it be cheaper? I still need to buy other ingredients too. For example, this bottle of white-edged sunflower petals."

The stall owner considered for a few seconds before grudgingly replying, "Two soli and six pence. I don't think you can find a price cheaper than that."

Klein immediately felt that he was overthinking things after seeing how the bespectacled man was buying ingredients other than the cow teeth paeonol.

However, he still tapped his glabella twice as an act of caution. He swept the man with his Spirit Vision.

No problems. He looks very healthy. His emotions are alright too. Mister, you need to keep this up...
Klein retracted his gaze, turned around, and looked at the stall selling homemade amulets once again.

The amulets were placed neatly before him. Some of them were made of pure silver, some with steel, others forged from gold.

But only a few of the amulets had a weak aura emanating from them, some crimson, some pale white, some golden.

This meant that some of them had weak traces of spirituality and were definitely effective to a certain extent!

Klein looked at the amulets carefully and confirmed that the stall owner making the amulets had some foundation in mysticism.

The stall owner did not make any mistakes matching the different energy sources to the different incantations. He was also extremely accurate at choosing the materials that corresponded to the different energy sources.

Of course, a mere mysticism enthusiast would definitely make some mistakes. Klein noticed that the stall owner did not fully understand the incantations. One could not create an incantation simply by translating the content of the prayer into Hermes. The incantations had to follow a certain format that followed unique rules.

The other problem was that the stall owner had made mistakes of varying degrees when he was choosing a suitable symbol for the energy sources. That explained why there were only two or three amulets releasing the faint light out of the dozens that were laid before him.

As for how much of an effect the two to three amulets would have, Klein could only say that it was better than nothing.

An amulet that was truly equipped with obvious effects needed the craftsman to release his spirituality from a blade while carving the incantations and symbols!

If one wanted even better results, they would have to supplement it with ritualistic magic.

And these two things were not something an ordinary person could achieve.

Klein tapped his glabella twice, then pointed at the upper left corner of the stall with his black cane.

“How much for these two?”

He did not ask about the amulets that had a rudimentary colored aura, but half-completed items. Other than external shape, they had not been carved with incantations or symbols.

To Klein, there was no reason to purchase the amulets that had weak effects. What he wanted to do was to transform the halfcompleted amulets into true amulets.

Hmm, I’ll make amulets that can protect a person from danger, one each for Benson and Melissa. As for my own, I can ask the Nighthawks to supply me with the ingredients... Man, I must have been influenced by Old Neil. I don’t feel any guilt when doing something like that... Klein’s mind wandered as he watched the stall owner pick up the half-completed silver amulets.

The first silver amulet was elongated and had a cavity in the middle. Around it were patterns of angel-like feathers. The craftsmanship was intricate and was very beautiful. The other was simple, almost completely devoid of any additional decorations or carvings. It had a vertical line representing the night, and a circle representing the crimson moon.

Klein, who paid much attention to appearances, took a liking to them immediately.

“This is six soli,” the middle-aged stall owner said, pointing to the intricate amulet. He was a man of few words.

After pausing for a while, he rubbed the simpler piece and said, “This is five soli three pence.”

“That’s too expensive. They are still far from being an amulet.” Klein had slowly been influenced by Benson and Melissa, so he had begun cultivating the habit of haggling.

After a battle of words, he bought the two silver accessories at five soli six pence and four soli nine pence respectively.

Yeah, they can only be considered silver accessories for the time being... Klein had that in mind.

The ten soli three pence was deducted from the reimbursement he received for his Divination Club membership.

Klein received the two silver accessories and placed them into his pocket. He was about to head to another stall when he heard a gentle voice.

“Sir, why are you not buying a completed amulet?”

Klein turned his head over and found a teenage girl asking him the question. She was about fifteen years of age and wore a lacy yellow dress while holding onto a veiled hat with a ribbon.

“It’s because I intend to make my own amulets. As you know, that is the wish of every enthusiast of mysticism,” Klein minced his words and answered.

He did not wish to make the stall owner think that he was trying to snatch his business, even though he had considered using his “skill” to earn a quick buck.

The teenage girl had naturally curly brown hair, and her face was adorable due to her baby fat. She looked at Klein with her light blue eyes and asked sincerely, “Can I seek your advice on choosing an amulet? Well, I was introduced here by a friend. I’ve been here several times and have a deep interest in mysticism. But I still do not know too much about it, and she, my friend, is going to turn sixteen soon. I wish to select an amulet as a gift to her. I didn’t bring her along as I want it to be a surprise... I had previously sought her advice, but I cannot remember a lot of the critical points.”

Klein gave a gentlemanly smile.

“What kind of protection amulets are you looking for? Something to avert misfortune? Something to avoid illnesses? Something that gives fortune? Different requirements would require different energy sources which means that they must point to different gods. Different gods would have different

corresponding constellations, and the different constellations would mean that different materials have to be used.

"For example, the incantation for averting misfortune would belong to the Empress of Misfortune and Horror, who is the Evernight Goddess. As mysticism enthusiasts, we all know that the symbol of the Evernight Goddess is the moon. The corresponding metal would thus be pure silver.

"Therefore, if we hope to avert misfortune, it is best that we choose an amulet that is made of pure silver and has the corresponding incantations."

We would also have to make sure that the incantations are of the correct language and format. The corresponding symbol of the Empress of Misfortune and Horror means the Path Number, the spell's characteristic, and the relative positions of the symbols, etc, must also be correct... But this is too complicated, and there's no need for me to explain this for you... Klein added inwardly.

The girl's eyes sparkled. She asked with a little doubt, "Can a follower of the Goddess wear an amulet belonging to another god?"

"No problem. The gods do not mind such small matters," Klein consoled her.

It was not a problem for the person wearing the amulet, but the person creating the amulet had to be careful. If a believer of the Lord of Storms were to craft an amulet of the Eternal Blazing Sun, they would most likely receive something malicious.

Of course, these referred to amulets requiring the aid of ritualistic magic. The craftsman need not pay much attention to this otherwise.

The teenage girl heaved a sigh of relief.

"I hope to get her an amulet for good health; which deity should I choose from? The Eternal Blazing Sun, Earth Mother, or the God of Knowledge and Wisdom?"

"There should be no problem with the Eternal Blazing Sun and Earth Mother. The former is represented by the sun while the latter is represented by the Brown Planet." Klein smiled as he said, "The material of the sun is gold, while the metal that symbolizes the Brown Planet is lead. I would suggest the sun, but I do not know if you brought enough money along with you."

The reason for his suggestion was because he had noticed that among the three amulets with a rudimentary spiritual glow, one of them was a health amulet that came under the domain of the sun.

"Isn't this..." Before the teenage girl finished her sentence, she stopped and warily looked at the stall owner who was waiting silently.

She thought for a moment before asking, "After I decide on the material, how should I distinguish the incantation and corresponding symbols?"

"Do you know Hermes?" Klein asked instead.

"I just started learning it," the teenage girl replied, a little embarrassed.

"Then let me choose it for you." Klein pointed at the health amulet made of gold and said, "This one has no problems, be it in the incantations or the representing symbol."

The teenage girl lifted the edges of her dress and squatted in front of the amulet. She picked up the health amulet with designs of the sun's rays around its edges. She felt as though the amulet was nourishing her, making her feel completely relaxed.

"Thank you, thank you." She stood up and curtsied in gratitude.

Klein laughed and said, "I'll leave the rest to you and the stall owner. I have other things to tend to."

He looked at the stall owner as he spoke and noticed that the man had a weird look in his eyes, as if deciding if he had to give a cut of the profit to Klein.

With a smile, Klein did not bother with the matter anymore. He continued touring the underground market, but he didn't notice any true Beyonder ingredients.

At this point, Old Neil had already paid off his debt. He was holding a dark colored wooden box in his hands.

He pointed to the other room behind and said after he noticed Klein's look of doubt, "Go there if you wish to buy or sell Beyonder ingredients. After all, no one wishes to let others know what extraordinary items they are purchasing."

"I understand." Klein nodded as though in thought.

There was no need for him to go there for the time being. He headed toward the exit of the underground market together with Old Neil.

"How much for these elf flowers?"

A query suddenly entered Klein's ears.

Elf flowers... That's also an ingredient for the Spectator potion... Klein thought as he glanced sideways. He once again saw the refined bespectacled man.

"What's the matter?" Old Neil asked curiously.

"Nothing much." Klein retracted his gaze.

Although he was a quasi-member of the Nighthawks, he did not feel that all Beyonders had to be absorbed by the Churches or locked up. He believed that it had to depend on the situation. Spectators definitely posed little danger to society or the kingdom, and the chances of losing control as a Sequence 9 were very slim.

...

After leaving Evil Dragon Bar, Klein and Old Neil took a public carriage and left the harbor. They then split ways at the North Borough and headed back to their respective homes.

The public transport steered into Daffodil Street and stopped by the side of the road. Klein was about to get off the carriage when he suddenly saw a young lady wearing a grayish-white dress about to board the carriage.

This lady had smooth black hair, her face a little round. She had thin eyes and unassuming features. But paired together, she gave off the feeling that she was sweet and gentle.

Klein noticed her not because of her beauty, but because he discovered that her body was shuddering slightly. It was an unnatural shudder.

"Miss, are you alright?" Klein asked in concern.

The young lady shook her head abruptly.

"No, I-I am just too tired."

The people behind Klein were urging for him to get off, so Klein could only leave the carriage.

When he found his footing, he paid attention to the situation from before again. He pinched his glabella twice, planning to determine if the lady was indeed alright.

He had the intention of sending her to the hospital if she had a serious illness that was going to act up soon.

Activating his Spirit Vision, the colors of the auras started to surface. Klein turned around and prepared to look at the sweet and gentle young lady.

Clip-clop, clip-clop.

The horses widened their paces as the wheels began rolling in tow. Despite activating his Spirit Vision and turning around, hoping to observe the refined and sweet lady, Klein did not have his wishes fulfilled. All his eyes reflected were brown figures moving past him.

Meanwhile, the passengers from the stop had already boarded the carriage. The carriage door was closed tightly as it gradually departed.

Within the carriage, twenty to thirty people stood closely to each other, their energy fields overlapping and shielding each other. Hence, it was an explosion of colors in Klein's vision, making it difficult for him to differentiate.

He shook his head quietly and raised his finger to tap his glabella to deactivate his Spirit Vision.

To him, it was simply help he could provide if he happened to chance upon it. However, if he were to miss it, and the situation was not especially clear, there was no point taking it to heart and delaying his own matters.

While bathing in the crimson moonlight, Klein strolled back home on the still bustling Daffodil Street. He returned to see Melissa sitting beside the dining table. She was busy doing her homework under a bright gas lamp.

She bit at the fountain pen and frowned, appearing deep in thought.

"Where's Benson?" Klein asked casually.

"Ah..." Melissa looked up. She blanked out for a few seconds before saying, "He said he went around a few boroughs today and was covered in sweat. He's taking a nice relaxing bath."

"Alright." Klein chuckled. Suddenly, he realized that she was wearing a dress he had never seen before.

It was entirely beige in color. It had fashionable engageantes. The collar and edges of her top had thin frills. Apart from that, it was a rather simple design, the type one wore as daily casual clothing. It fully accentuated the youth of a sixteen or seventeenyear-old.

"New dress?" Klein asked with a smile.

It was a purchase that he and Benson had insisted upon.

Melissa answered in the affirmative tersely.

"I just took it back from Mrs. Rochelle. I was thinking that since I had to wash it later, I might as well try it on first." Klein was rather puzzled when he heard that.

"Mrs. Rochelle?"

Wasn't she our former neighbor?

Melissa nodded and explained in all seriousness, "Mrs. Rochelle is actually a seamstress, but she was quite unlucky. She had no choice but to sew and mend clothes for others at home. She leads a pretty tough life. I knew that she had pretty good skill and the price she quoted is cheaper than at a women's clothing store. Furthermore, it's very well-tailored to my figure, so I ordered a new skirt from her. It only cost nine soli and five pence and took only a few days. A dress of a similar style would cost three halves of a pound at Harrods Department Store!"

What a frugal girl... Sis, I know that at least half the reason is due to your pity of Mrs. Rochelle... Klein did not reproach Melissa for deciding things for herself. Instead, he said with a smile, "When did you go to Harrods?"

That was at Howes Street, near the Divination Club. It was somewhere where the middle-class shopped.

"..." Melissa was momentarily at a loss for words. It took her a long while before she said, "It was Selena and Elizabeth. They insisted I accompany them. Actually, well—I actually prefer gears more. I like places with steam and machinery. Yeah."

"It's quite, well—nice for a girl to occasionally shop at a department store." Klein laughed as he comforted his sister.

After some idle talk, he briskly walked to the second floor, hoping to wash away the repulsive mixed smells from the bar.

Just as he was about to return to his bedroom to get a change of clothes, he suddenly heard sounds coming from the bathroom close to the balcony.

A few seconds later, Benson stepped out while drying his gradually receding hairline.

"How was it? Did you compliment Melissa's new dress?" He shot a glance at Klein and asked with a smile.

"I guess I forgot. All I did was ask where it was done..." Klein thought for a moment as he said.

Benson immediately chortled and shook his head.

"How unbecoming of an elder brother. When Melissa received the dress, she couldn't bear putting it down. After rushing to cook and wash the dishes, she immediately wore the dress and has refused to take it off ever since."

...Wasn't she planning on changing after showering? She can wash and starch the clothes while doing so... Klein subconsciously refuted with the explanation that Melissa had given.

"Tsk." Benson sighed. "It's been scorching the past few days. She was busy in the kitchen for a long time, so I believe she would feel much better doing her homework after a shower."

That's right... Klein was suddenly enlightened as he gave his brother a knowing smile.

So that's what kind of person you are, Melissa... There's nothing wrong with a girl caring for her appearance. There's no need to find excuses... The corners of his mouth curved up as he shook his head gently before walking into his bedroom.

While he was showering, Klein faintly heard knocking downstairs. He immediately wondered.

Doesn't the worker who's in charge of collecting coins for the gas meter come only once every two weeks?

Could it be Mrs. Shaud from next door? That can't be. It's said that this lady strictly abides by the etiquette of middle-class society. She would not visit at an inappropriate time.

In his puzzlement, Klein wiped dry his body. Wearing old but comfortable shirt and trousers, he came down the stairs.

He surveyed the area but did not notice any strangers. He asked, "Was someone at the door just now?"

Benson, who was reading the newspapers casually, said with a smile, "It was Bitsch Mountbatten, one of the policemen in charge of Iron Cross Street. He asked if we met an eighteen or nineteen-year-old boy who has a rotund face. Heh, he even gave us a sketch to identify. Unfortunately, neither one of us have seen him, or we would have received a reward. What about you?" "Nope." Klein had a general idea what was happening.

Instigator Tris had successfully escaped the Evil Dragon Bar at the harbor. He had escaped somewhere close to Iron Cross Street and Daffodil Street; therefore, the police were making visits from door to door.

And to go this far made it clear that the operation of nabbing the Instigator had completely failed!

Klein did not bother himself with the situation. He had yet to begin combat training. He only had basic mastery of shooting, so to consider dealing with a natural 'Assassin' was simply using his life as a joke.

He did not sleep well that night. He kept worrying that the Instigator would infiltrate their house to hide, causing another massacre.

Thankfully, Daffodil Street was quiet the entire night, with the morning sun rays dispersing all the fog.

The relaxed Klein changed into formal attire, wore his top hat, held his cane, and went all the way to Zouteland Street. He greeted Rozanne at the reception hall.

"Good morning, Klein," replied Rozanne happily. She suppressed her voice and said, "I heard the huge

operation last night failed?" "The operation to nab Instigator Tris?" Klein asked in curiosity.

"Yeah!" Rozanne nodded heavily. She shot a glance at the partition and said, "Apparently an informant of the Mandated Punishers discovered the Instigator at the harbor... They were planning on waiting for additional Beyonders and another Special Operations squad from the police to arrive before beginning the operation to do the deed instantly without alarming the commoners. Unfortunately, that Instigator was extremely sharp. He charged out of the encirclement when he noticed something amiss, successfully escaping as a result."

"At such times, they need a Beyonder with tracking abilities, such as me." Klein made a joke.

"There was no lack of trackers back then." Dunn Smith's voice suddenly sounded.

Rozanne turned her head abruptly and saw the captain wearing his black trench coat. He was glaring right at her with his deep pair of gray eyes while leaning against the partition's frame.

She hurriedly raised her hands to cover her mouth. Then, she shook her head incessantly, expressing her futile innocence.

Dunn turned his gaze to Klein and after some thought, he said, "There were a total of six Beyonders from the Mandated Punishers, the Machinery Hivemind, and us Nighthawks. We traced the injured Tris to Iron Cross Street's Lower Street. We found his temporary residence, but the clues ended there. Be it Beyonder methods or ordinary investigations, nothing worked. It was as though he evaporated into thin air, disappearing completely."

"Do you need my help with divination?" Klein asked probingly.

Dunn shook his head gently.

"The Machinery Hivemind had a Mystery Pryer. He is a senior

Beyonder as good as Old Neil. I even suspect that he's already at

Sequence 8. I'm just unaware what the name of the

corresponding potion is."

"The Theosophy Order's heritage to this day must have something special about it," consoled Klein.

For the rest of the morning, he continued his mysticism curriculum, read the historical information and documents, and practiced various techniques just like always.

With lunchtime almost approaching, Klein's mind began to wander.

Another few minutes later, he put away the documents, having heard the summoning of his stomach.

At that moment, Dunn Smith came into the clerk office. He said in a deep but mild manner, “Klein, follow me to Chanis Gate. Sealed Artifact 2-049 has arrived. The subsequent operation might require your sensing of that notebook.” “...Alright,” Klein got up and replied.

His thoughts became scrambled. He imagined how the Sealed Artifact would look or if the operation would be dangerous.

While in this rather tense silence, he followed Dunn down the stairs and into the tunnel.

After going straight at the intersection, Dunn suddenly stopped and turned his head, saying sternly, “Do this action together with me. Keep doing it and absolutely do not stop. Remember, absolutely do not stop. This is for your own safety!”

While speaking, Dunn bent his arm followed by extending it. He repeated this action without stopping.

Klein looked at the captain demonstrate in a befuddled manner. Suddenly enlightened, he asked, “Has this got to do with the uniqueness of the Sealed Artifact?”

“Yes.” Dunn nodded with abnormal seriousness. “Repeating such an action will allow us to discover if anything happens to you immediately. Saving you in time will not result in any lifethreatening dangers.”

“Okay.” Klein did not hesitate further as he began the repeated action of bending and extending his arm.

“If your arm is sore, use the other one,” added Dunn.

Sealed Artifact “2-049” sure is odd... What meaning does this action have? It seems very dangerous... These thoughts flashed past Klein’s mind as he looked solemnly at the captain.

“Alright.”

He had too many questions on his mind, but since Chanis Gate was in sight, he had no choice but to bear with it.

Besides, with my security clearance, I’ll probably not learn of the details. I can only do as I’m ordered... Klein exhaled as he followed Captain Dunn to the Keeper room outside Chanis Gate.

Klein repeatedly bent and extended his arm as he watched Dunn push open the Keeper's room with his body sideways.

The captain's carefulness and high alertness, as well as the ridiculous and laughable "protective actions," left him feeling abnormally tensed. The feeling was identical to what he felt when taking tests of courage that required him to walk through spooky cemeteries at night in his youth.

A Grade 2 Sealed Artifact. Dangerous. To be used with care and moderation... It is something even a formal Nighthawk member does not know the details to... It is unknown how dangerous it is... Amid his tense nerves, Klein found it impossible to curb himself from overthinking.

At that moment, his brain suddenly turned numb as though a power switch had been flicked off.

Everything in Klein's vision turned slow. Even his arm actions shared the same fate.

He saw Captain Dunn stop in his tracks. He came close to him as though in slow motion, extending his palm out slowly before pushing him in the shoulder.

Suddenly, Klein's thought processes and vision were restored to normal at the same time. It was as though everything from before was just an illusion.

"What happened?" he whispered amid his fright and confusion.

Dunn shook his head and said in a deep voice, "Observe

carefully."

The moment he finished his sentence, he turned around and walked into the Keeper's room. Klein followed closely behind and saw four other people in the room; they were either seated or standing.

One of them was the Midnight Poet, Leonard. The other three were people Klein had never met before. However, all of them shared a common trait. They were all doing the extending and bending arm "exercise" with utmost seriousness.

"Klein Moretti has a miraculous connection with the Antigonus family's notebook." Dunn gave a brief introduction.

Then, he pointed to the other three strangers and said, "These lady and gentlemen are colleagues from the Backlund diocese. They escorted Sealed Artifact 2-049 here. This is Madam Lorotta, Sequence 8 Gravedigger. She is a master sharpshooter."

At that moment, the black-haired woman who looked about thirty nodded at Klein in a friendly manner.

She looked pretty good. She did not wear a hat and was dressed in what appeared like male attire—a black coat with a white shirt, tight black trousers and black leather boots. The corners of her mouth were slightly curved up.

After Klein exchanged greetings, Dunn pointed to a man seated behind the desk.

"Aiur Harson, someone just like me."

Before he finished his sentence, Klein saw Mr. Aiur Harson in his gray trench coat turn sluggish with his arm motion. It was as though a gear had lost its lubricant or a joint covered in rust.

What's wrong... Amid Klein's daze, he saw Lorotta push Aiur Harson. Only then did the gentleman's actions return to normal.

Was I like that previously? Klein was first taken aback before he came to the realization.

This indicated the dangers that Sealed Artifact 02-49 held!

What would happen if one was not awoken in time?

Would one become a zombie?

Filled with questions, Klein greeted the charming middle-aged Aiur Harson.

"Borgia," Dunn said as he pointed to the last Nighthawk.

Borgia was a cold man with a knife scar on the side of his face. His sharp brown eyes were like an eagle's. He was constantly observing everyone in the room.

"Let's set off. The faster we end this, the faster we can seal 2-049," the handsome Aiur Harson said as he stood, his eyes revealing some wrinkles.

So, where is 2-049? Klein surveyed his surroundings curiously but did not notice any traces of the Sealed Artifact. Of course, he could not see the areas obscured by the table without activating his Spirit Vision.

"Alright," Dunn turned and looked at Leonard Mitchell. "You'll be in charge of driving. It is best not to involve Cesare with matters like this."

Cesare was the clerk in charge of procuring and collecting supplies for the Tingen Nighthawks while standing in as a carriage driver. He was the one who drove Klein to Welch's home to meet the Spirit Medium Daly.

"No problem." Leonard stopped acting frivolous and nodded seriously.

At that moment, Klein saw Aiur Harson bending over. He picked up a black metal chest which had been obscured by the table.

The chest was carved with resplendent stars and the crimson full moon. It was as though there was a formless barrier around the chest.

The Sealed Artifact should be inside there? I wonder what 2-049 looks like... Klein observed the chest curiously.

Thump!

Thump! Thump!

Violent knocking sounds suddenly erupted from the black chest.

Even the surface of the chest bulged time and time again.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

It was as though something horrifying had awakened within the chest and was pounding wildly. The sound of the knocking was beaten into the hearts of everyone present.

It's alive? Just as Klein had a thought, he saw Captain Dunn's arm exercises turning sluggish, as if his joints were layered with glue.

Borgia, the Nighthawk from Backlund, pushed Dunn's shoulder, allowing him to recover.

It's like doing the robot dance when one is affected by 2-049... If all of us are under its influence, wouldn't we be some awkward dance squad... Luckily, 2-049 seems capable of only influencing one person at a time... Klein lampooned to relax his tense nerves. He did not dare halt his arm exercises.

He followed Dunn's lead and left his cane behind. He then followed behind the five Nighthawks through the tunnel and up the stairs to the second floor of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard had gone ahead and notified everyone in the front of the buildings, so Rozanne and the rest had all made their way to the third level. These incidents rarely involved them, but they were not completely alien to them. Another Nighthawk, Kenley, had replaced Dunn in his watch over Chanis Gate.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief when he reached the carriage. He looked suspiciously out the window and said, “Won’t 2-049 affect the ordinary people on the streets?”

From their journey underground to the carriage, Sealed Artifact 2-049 had already caused six sluggish incidents, two of which were targeted at him. He had been jolted awake by Captain Dunn and Leonard Mitchell respectively. The rate of the sluggish effect was rather alarming!

“No worries, 2-049 will target humanoid creatures within five meters of it first. The closer you are to it, the easier it is for you to be chosen. As long as there are three people surrounding it, people who happen to be around when the carriage steers past will not be affected,” the beautiful, black-haired lady Lorotta explained with a lazy tone.

What a weird Sealed Artifact... Klein thought as he continued his arm exercises.

Dunn and the rest of the Nighthawks did not speak on the journey to Ray Bieber’s house. They were paying close attention to each other’s condition. Only Lorotta wore a nonchalant look. At times, she took in the sights of Tingen’s not-so-clean streets, and at other times, she praised Backlund’s underground water system.

Soon after, the familiar building finally entered Klein’s line of sight. The group of six made their way to the third level while observing each other.

The door to Ray Bieber’s house was labeled with the Tingen Police Department’s symbol, indicating that entry was forbidden to unauthorized personnel.

As Dunn did his stretching exercises, he took out a key. He opened the newly changed lock, then turned around, allowing Aiur Harson who was carrying the black chest to enter first.

Thump!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The Sealed Artifact in the black chest knocked violently once again, even more violent than before. This made Aiur Harson’s arm waver from side to side uncontrollably. It even made Klein suspect that the chest would be pounded open in time.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Klein quickly noticed that Captain Dunn’s movements were becoming sluggish. He was about to wake him up when a buzz sounded in his brain. His brain became numb, the scenes before his eyes played as though they were in slow motion.

Didn’t they say that... that it only affects one... person at a time... Klein’s thoughts quickly became sluggish.

At this moment, the prepared Lorotta and Borgia woke each of them up respectively by pushing them.

Having his thought processes and vision restored, Klein looked around with lingering fear. He nearly blurted out.

“Didn’t you say that 2-049 can only affect one person at a time?” *Thankfully, I did not stop my stretches!*

“When Sealed Artifact 2-049 enters its berserk mode, it can affect up to two people at once. We can confirm that Ray Bieber is indeed a descendant of the Antigonus family,” Aiur Harson said with a mechanical tone.

Lorota let out a faint laugh. She looked at Klein and said, “2-049 becomes very agitated when it meets a descendant of the Antigonus family, even if only their scent remains. Its abilities would also increase considerably. I believe you would be able to understand its feelings.”

Well, I don’t... Klein asked curiously, “So, is it a living creature?” Lorotta smiled but did not reply him directly.

“You’ll know in a while. As long as Ray Bieber hasn’t escaped Tingen, 2-049 will lead us to him.”

Klein could only put his other questions on hold as he walked around the room with the Nighthawks.

Amid the loud and violent thumping from the chest, they locked the door, walked down the stairs, and returned to the carriage.

Aiur Harson looked out the window several times and confirmed that there were no pedestrians within a five-meter radius of them. He then placed the black chest on the ground and twisted the mechanical switch to release its spiritual restraints.

The violent thumping stopped suddenly, slipping the entire carriage into silence. Not even the breaths of the Nighthawks could be heard.

Klein held his breath as the black chest opened slowly. A sharp creak that hurt his ears could be heard.

Creak!

The chest fell as a slender brown arm extended out of the chest. It was about the length of a child’s finger.

Two arms pressed forward one after another as an object about the size a normal human being’s palm appeared bit by bit in front of Klein and company.

It had clear elbow, finger, and knee joints. Covered in an oilstained brown cloth, its face was painted with the colors of a clown—red and yellow.

It was a wooden puppet with a weird appearance!

2-049 lifted its head and looked at Klein with its pure black eyes.

Its rigid mouth slowly parted to reveal a clown-like smile.

The wooden puppet's face was painted in red and yellow like the common clown. The corners of its mouth were upturned high, revealing an abnormally comical smile.

Its lips parted to reveal a dark and deep mouth. Klein, who had locked his gaze with it, felt his hair stand as intense horror leaped out of his heart in an uncontrollable manner.

Everything before his eyes grew dull, as though he was looking at the world through a piece of thick brown glass.

Klein's thoughts slowed down gradually, and he instinctively wanted to ask for help, but his neck seemed to be held tight by a rope. He couldn't make a single sound, and the single word was trapped in silence.

Just then, Dunn noticed his arm exercises becoming sluggish and pushed him heavily.

The brown glass before Klein's eyes shattered in an instant. He blurted out the word "help" which had remained dormant in his throat. It reverberated within the carriage, with sharp panic.

"It's getting stronger," Klein spoke in a very certain tone.

Being next to a strange Sealed Artifact like 2-049 really placed on in terrifying peril if they were not careful. No, it was totally impossible to guard against it. It could only be avoided through other methods!

"It's normal," Aiur Harson said steadily, nodding.

Lorotta chuckled.

"It seems to like you? Don't worry. It is a relatively less dangerous Grade 2 Sealed Artifact."

In her naturally languid voice, the puppet whose joints clearly reflected a human's stood up. It began tottering towards its left.

Its action was incomprehensible, just like a steam engine that someone had rusted due to a lack of lubricating oil.

Robot dance... Klein suddenly had the few Chinese words pop into his head. He had a new guess of the danger 2-049 posed.

It assimilates the living things that it seizes control of?

If I am not woken up in time by the others, would I have become a human-sized puppet, a real-life Barbie doll?

Just as thoughts flooded Klein, Aiur Harson was awoken by Dunn. He extended and bent his arms as he pointed in the direction that the puppet was walking slowly towards. He said to Leonard who was driving the carriage, "Over there!"

Leonard couldn't make the carriage pass through the building, so he had to detour. During the detour, 2-049 constantly adjusted the direction that it was facing. It acted like a compass that pointed towards the Antigonus family.

Upon seeing the scene, Klein, who was constantly "exercising" his arms, nearly burst out laughing under the tension.

I heard that 2-049 was created by the Antigonus family... Is this an act of loyalty or the perfect example of screwing things up?

Leonard drove the carriage according to Aiur Harson's occasional instructions.

Whenever the strange puppet 2-049 walked to the edge of the carriage, Aiur Harson would pull it back and start it all over again.

Every time that happened, its mouth would open and two people would be under its influence simultaneously.

Klein's taut feelings gradually began to relax. He realized that Sealed Artifact 2-049 was not as scary anymore. As long as there were more than three people present and they constantly maintained their arm motions, if they made sure to wake their partners in time, 2-049 was merely a puppet with slightly unique characteristics.

The carriage traveled at high speed, and quickly arrived at the harbor, where warehouses were clustered.

After circling a few times, they confirmed that 2-049 intended to enter the innermost grayish-white warehouse. Aiur Harson's expression turned solemn. He grabbed the puppet carefully and stuffed it back into the black chest.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Under constant ferocious knocking, Aiur woke up again and again with the help of Borgia and Lorotta as he activated the mechanism with great effort. He then injected his spirituality and activated the star and crimson symbols on the chest.

At the reappearance of the formless seal, Aiur Harson let out a long heavy breath.

"Let's get down," Dunn Smith said with a low and mild voice. "Leonard, tying the horse here will do."

Dressed in trench coats, suits, or shirts, the six left the carriage and walked into the innermost warehouse. As they walked, they uniformly stretched and bent their arms.

This added a comical and ridiculous vibe to the rather tense situation.

The Nighthawk Awkward Dance Squad... Klein could only complain inwardly to ease such a feeling.

However, there was no other way around it. According to his observations, 2-049 first affected the upper body. Therefore, to detect it in time to prevent a more dangerous situation from developing, they only had the choice of extending and bending their arms, shake their necks or bodies. However, the latter only made one look like a hooligan.

As for actions like blinking eyes and striking one's eyebrows, they were either too easily ignored or the action was too big. Neither was a good option.

This awkward dance squad is better than Causeway Bay [1] *triad members...* Klein sighed in resignation and followed Captain Dunn Smith and company.

As they approached the warehouse's door, the deeper his anxiety and worry became.

No one knew what kind of effect the notebook had on Ray Bieber!

If something dire happened, Klein did not dare pin his hopes on transmigrating again.

Furthermore, he discovered that he could still be injured and bleed while chopping ingredients for dinner. The speed at which he recovered at was normal too. He wasn't some kind of monster that was impervious to combat or death.

As they walked, Dunn suddenly lowered his non-moving hand and made a pressing gesture to beckon everyone to stop ten meters away from the warehouse's door.

"Klein, divine if there is any danger in the warehouse. It'd be better if you could tell the level of danger," Dunn said as he turned his head to Klein.

His gray eyes looked deep as usual; there was no fear.

Klein gave an unnoticeable nod and stopped the hand exercise. He extended his right hand to his left cuff and removed the silver chain that had a hanging piece of topaz.

As he was still moving his arms, Dunn realized his sluggish actions in time and woke him up with a nudge.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand and allowed the topaz to hang down naturally. Simultaneously, he moved his right arm, but with a much smaller range of motion.

When the topaz stabilized, he half closed his eyes, outlined the spherical light, and entered Cogitation. He then mumbled,

"There's danger in the warehouse." "There's danger in the warehouse."

...

After seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the hanging topaz slowly going in clockwise circles.

It turned faster and faster, and in the end, Klein felt like it was pulling his left hand.

"There's danger, great danger," Klein replied honestly.

Clockwise meant affirmation to the chanted statement, while counter-clockwise meant denial.

To other Beyonders, even a Mystery Pryer, using spirit dowsing could only determine if there was danger, but it was unable to obtain information regarding the level of danger.

However, Klein discovered that when he used spirit dowsing, the pendulum would spin at different speeds, revealing the degree of the answer.

Although it was not very accurate and extremely vague, it allowed one to have a rough assessment of the actual situation.

As expected of a Seer potion... Klein was rather happy with the outcome.

Just as he was about to put away the topaz pendulum, Leonard Mitchell, who had maintained his silence, suddenly spoke.

"Divine if there is danger around us also."

Dunn nodded in agreement. "Yes, I am worried that the Secret Order will not give up and that it has placed Ray Bieber's house under constant surveillance. They could have followed us here and could cause trouble at a critical moment."

Klein took a deep breath and entered a calm, ethereal state once again.

When the silver chain turned stable once again, he recited in his heart, "There is danger surrounding us."

...

"There is danger surrounding us."

...

After repeating the statement, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the silver chain.

In his dark brown eyes, the topaz pendulum first moved counterclockwise with difficulty. Then, it suddenly paused and started moving clockwise.

"There is danger surrounding us." Klein felt a tug on his heartstrings as he spoke carefully.

Furthermore, someone had tried to intercept his divination, but had lost to him in the invisible fight!

Just as he spoke, an orange-yellow fireball the size of a fist flew towards them.

It came crashing towards the middle of the group with its blazing speed.

Dunn Smith, who had already drawn his long-barreled revolver before Klein did his divination, immediately raised his hand, aimed, and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The fireball didn't seem to be affected by the gunshot but continued its original trajectory, as though it was forcing everyone to scatter from dodging.

Klein originally thought nothing of the troublemaker who was following them. After all, there were six Beyonders present. They were not even short of Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 experts. It was a lineup that was practically unstoppable in a small city like Tingen.

But when the fireball smashed down, he came to a sudden realization.

To them, the most dangerous enemy was not the tracker nor the troublemaker, it wasn't even Ray Bieber who was in the warehouse in an unknown state, but the Sealed Artifact 2-049!

Once they dispersed and the battle began, they wouldn't be able to wake each other in time. Then, they would turn into real-life puppets one after another!

As these chaotic thoughts bombarded him, Klein was pulled by Leonard aside to dodge the fireball.

Without the time to feel anguish for his clothing, he saw the Nighthawks split off into two groups while dodging. It was done very orderly.

Poof!

The orange-yellow fireball landed on the ground but didn't stir one bit of dust. It disappeared as though nothing had happened.

An illusion? Just as this thought came to him, Klein saw Aiur Harson lift the black chest and threw it least ten meters away.

"Stay away from it! Watch it!" Aiur shouted.

Before he finished his shout, Leonard and Borgia had separately approached it. They stood at least seven meters from the chest to prevent anyone from approaching.

As for Dunn and Lorotta, they each held guns. They stood beside Aiur Harson who had drawn a thin silver sword. They took up a formation resembling a crescent as they rushed towards the origins of the fireball, while taking note of the peripheral regions.

Upon seeing this scene, Klein, who needed to do the arm exercises without his cane, immediately heaved a sigh of relief. He realized he had overlooked an important matter.

2-049 had a limited range of influence. As long as they were at a sufficient distance from it, they did not need to worry about the danger.

Klein rolled over and stood up. He stuffed his topaz pendulum into his pocket with one hand while he reached into his holster for his revolver with the other.

---

1. A location in Hong Kong.

Under the illumination of the afternoon sun, Klein in his dustcoated clothes quickly twisted his revolver's barrel to remove his self-imposed safety. He went into a shooting stance, allowing the light to reflect from the brass body of the revolver.

He held the revolver with one hand, and moved his other arm, cautiously paying attention to anything that could happen around him.

At the same time, he was a little worried for Captain Dunn and Mr. Aiur Harson. After all, both were Nightmare Beyonders who specialized in influencing the enemy from the shadows. He did not know if they were adept at direct combat.

Just as Klein was having these considerations, Aiur Harson slowed down, his expression becoming serene and peaceful.

He opened his mouth and recited a peaceful poem, one that seemed to place a person into the night.

"When once the sun sinks in the west,

"And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;

"Almost as pale as moonbeams are,

"Or its companionable star,

"The evening primrose opens anew

"Its delicate blossoms to the dew; "And, hermit-like, shunning the light [1]"

...

The recital reverberated around them. Klein nearly lost his tense feelings and completely relaxed.

He was lucky that he had experienced something similar before and was not facing Aiur Harson. Thus, he quickly collected himself and entered a half-cogitative state to combat the influence of the poem.

Phew... He let out a sigh of relief. He no longer had any doubts about Dunn's and Aiur's direct combat abilities.

As he had only advanced recently and still did not have a deep understanding of Sequence potions, Klein had forgotten that the Sequence 7 Nightmare was the advancement of Sequence 8 Midnight Poet. They could keep whatever abilities they had before and, in fact, enjoy a small increase in their abilities.

The impression Klein had of Midnight Poets all came from Leonard Mitchell. He knew that this "job" inherited the unique traits of a Sleepless. They were good at combat, shooting, climbing, and sensing. They were also adept in influencing the living creatures around them through the use of various poems.

In simpler terms, they were violent poets.

While Aiur was reciting his poem, the large wooden crates stacked up around them seemed to suddenly ripple like water. A man wearing a black tuxedo and halved top hat appeared.

But this man's face was painted in three pastel colors—red, yellow, and white. The sides of his lips were arched high like a clown, forming a ridiculous contrast with his formal wear that was suitable for joining an evening banquet.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The black-haired Lorotta who had been introduced as a sharpshooter charged forward quickly. She had a gun in one hand and had clenched the other into a fist. She made it within inches of the suited clown in a few steps.

The suited clown seemed to be affected by Aiur Harson's poem. His body was swaying, and he had a peaceful expression in his eyes. He did not have any desire to retaliate.

Lorotta tilted her body with a boxing maneuver as she pulled back her fist, then punched toward the suited clown's face.

Bang!

The air crackled as the suited clown shattered suddenly like a mirror, pieces quickly evaporating and vanishing into thin air.

At this moment, the suited clown quickly appeared once again in the shadows of the wooden crates a few steps away. The suited clown's figure outline quickly appeared again.

The person under the influence of the poem was only an illusion! It was a performance!

The suited clown grinned again. It had a comical look as he pressed down on his halved top hat with one hand and pointed a finger gun with the other.

Bang!

The sound of a shot rang from the finger gun. Lorotta fell to the left and rolled on the floor, dodging the attack.

But nothing had happened, except for the fake gunshot.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn and Aiur each lifted their guns and fired steadily. The suited clown dodged adeptly, sometimes to the right and left, sometimes rolling on the ground. It was as if he was an acrobat act in a circus.

Suddenly, Lorotta surprisingly charged forward again. Despite being called a sharpshooter, she was still using her fists.

Bam!

The suited clown could not dodge the attack in time and could only lift his left arm to block the fist.

Seeing the clown stop, Dunn and Aiur did not hesitate to each take aim and pulled the trigger.

At this moment, the arm that the suited clown used to block Lorotta's fist ignited with an orange-yellow flame.

In an instant, the flame enveloped the suited clown and spread towards Lorotta.

Bang! Bang! Dunn and Aiur fired their revolvers, hitting the ball of flame.

The flames burned rapidly and soon, all that was left were black ashes floating in the sky. But the suited clown once again appeared behind the stack of wooden crates close by.

He lifted his right hand and pointed a finger gun once again.

Bang!

Amid the illusory gunshot, Lorotta suddenly stopped in her tracks. She did not charge forward. Mud was splattering in front of her as a bullet appeared.

The suited clown was no longer delivering an illusion with this strike!

It was hard to discern real from fake, reality from illusion.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The suited clown shot at Dunn and Aiur repeatedly while hiding away and appearing at random times.

Upon seeing this, Lorotta squinted and lifted the dull gold revolver in her left hand.

Bang!

The suited clown suddenly squatted down, avoiding the fatal shot. His halved top hat was sent flying backward, falling to the ground. The bullet had left a visible scorch mark on the hat.

After rolling a few times on the floor, the suited clown scaled the stacks of wooden crates with the agility of a monkey. He shot air bullets out of his finger gun from the high ground.

Aiur Hanson took a few steps back and lowered his gun. He began his recital once again.

“Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,

“Who, blindfold to its fond caresses, “Knows not the beauty it possesses.”

...

The suited clown jumped repeatedly between the crates. He suddenly raised his hand to scratch his ears and looked at Aiur with a comical smile.

Could he have stuffed his ears? The Sequence potion that the Secret Order possesses sure is weird... Klein observed the fight from far away as he made silent guesses.

Just as his thoughts flashed through him, he suddenly saw a figure appear at the top of a warehouse beside him.

Furthermore, it was running straight inside where Ray Bieber was hiding.

That figure was dressed in a grayish-white uniform, one which workers at the docks wore. His face also appeared to be painted red, yellow, and white.

The suited clown is responsible for distracting Captain and the rest while the other person retrieved the diary? Klein instinctively raised his right hand and shot at the figure on the roof.

He had just taken aim when the figure suddenly squatted, switching from running to rolling on the ground.

Bang!

Klein did not stop pulling the trigger. He saw the figure suddenly pause, blood blooming in a spurt.

The figure looked at him in shock. While bearing the pain, he continued charging into the warehouse.

That felt like a lucky shot... Klein twitched his lips and pulled the trigger once again. This time, the bullet hit the wooden roof beside the figure.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Leonard and Borgia also shot but did not hit the figure.

Klein wanted to criticize how terrible their shooting skills were as compared to his when he suddenly stopped pulling the trigger.

That’s right! Why must we stop him?

Didn’t I divine that there is grave danger in the warehouse just now? Wouldn’t it be great if we let that guy be the vanguard and step on the land mine for us?

Leonard and that Mr. Borgia must have had the same idea...

With this thought, Klein lifted the barrel of his revolver and shot at the sky.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the gunshots rang, the figure managed to reach the innermost region of the warehouse unobstructed.

He lunged downwards, slamming into the roof as he fell down with the collapsing roof.

Immediately following the commotion, the black-haired Lorotta's eyes suddenly turned black. Her left hand began making a strange pulling action.

The suited clown's jumping actions suddenly came to a pause as his ankle seemed to be grasped tightly by an invisible hand.

Dunn did not shoot immediately and instead pointed his revolver downward.

He opened his mouth and by simply using his spirituality to resonate the air around him, he produced a strange, faint and ethereal voice without the use of his throat.

"Thus it blooms on while night is by;

"When day looks out with open eye,

"Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,

"It faints and withers and is gone."

...

The suited clown suddenly became limp, as if he had lost the desire to live.

Aiur Harson lifted his handgun and took aim, his finger pulling the trigger immediately.

In that split second, there was an abnormal and tragic wail that came from the warehouse.

"Ah!"

The cry contained immense fear as though he had encountered an unimaginably terrifying matter.

The hair on Klein's body stood on end. The tragic cries came to a sudden stop as silence was restored in the deepest parts of the warehouse. It was a skin-crawling silence.

Bang!

Affected by the cry, Aiur only managed to shoot the suited clown in the belly.

Haaa... Haaa... Haaa! The silence was once again broken from the deepest depths of the warehouse. What should have been soft panting sounded. It reached a crescendo that tightened everyone's nerves.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Inside the black chest, 2-049 had reached a frenzied state.

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1. Adapted from John Clare's Evening Primrose.

Haa! Haa! Haa!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The loud panting and the intense knocking alternated first before they resounded together. It made Klein and company extremely nervous, as though they were hearing some evil murmur.

Taking advantage of the moment Aiur, Dunn and Lorotta had their attention redirected, the suited clown suddenly pulled out a long piece of paper from his pocket.

Pa! He threw it with his right hand as the slip of paper ignited into a black fiery whip. Then, he lashed it towards the side of his ankle.

A fleeting but tragic scream sounded as the suited clown escaped the invisible shackles and did a backflip.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta shot but their bullets only ended up hitting the wooden crates.

The suited clown did not stay any longer as he pressed down on his wound with his right hand while escaping in a direction opposite the warehouse.

He was so fast that in the blink of an eye, all that was left was a hint of his back.

And before he vanished, his right hand which pressed down on his abdomen moved towards his left arm. The wound on his stomach had already vanished, looking completely fine.

The location on his left arm which he touched with his right hand suddenly became badly mangled, and a silver bullet appeared in the torn flesh.

Dunn and the rest didn't chase after him because the panting from the innermost warehouse was so loud that it was making them nervous and insecure.

Bang!

The door of the innermost warehouse suddenly exploded and flew in all directions.

Then, something wrapped with a torn cloth flew out and landed not far from Klein.

When Klein cast his gaze over, he realized that it was an arm. Its bloody flesh had been chewed on and its white bones were cracked in an irregular fashion as they jutted out *Pa! Pa! Pa!*

One item after another flew out. First it was a spray of blood, followed by a dilated eye and an ear which had been ripped out brutally. Finally, half a beating heart and intestines filled with yellowish-brown objects came out.

If Klein had not seen the more gruesome giant cadaver at Ray Bieber's place, he would have probably vomited there and then.

His nerves were on the brink of a breakdown. After a great deal of effort to hold back his urge to shoot into the pitch-black entrance, he ejected the empty shells from his revolver and reloaded with new demon hunting bullets.

Bang!

Dunn drew close as he stably shot into the warehouse.

However, his bullet was like a shot into the sea. There was no audible response.

Haa! Haa! Haa!

The loud panting sped up as grayish-white colors filled the opened door.

With another two loud shots, Aiur Harson's and Borgia's bullets tore through the whiteness, but failed to prevent the "color" from spilling outwards. It did not leave any wounds or cause liquid to seep out.

Klein held his breath and kept himself from shooting blindly. He watched as the whiteness slowly revealed a complete outline.

It was a humanoid creature more than two meters tall. Its limb joints were all unnaturally twisted. It was as though they had been snapped by someone forcefully.

White bones poked out from under its skin as the entire grayishwhite surface was filled with gullies, like a human brain that had been stripped from its shell.

The monster had grayish-white, rotting, sticky liquid flowing all over it. Its head looked relatively normal, with deep wrinkles and pale skin.

As it opened and closed its mouth, Klein could see a porcelain false tooth that looked close to falling out, a few strands of bloody saliva, and bone and flesh that had been minced.

*Was... Ray Bieber still even f**king human?* Klein drew a silent gasp as he felt his heart pound rapidly.

Bang!

Leonard's demon hunting bullet hit Ray Bieber's forehead and tore right through it, leaving behind a deep hole.

Grayish-white liquid flowed out and dripped onto the ground. The liquid wriggled and turned into fat cream-colored maggots.

But the monster appeared completely unaffected. It was neither fast nor slow when it pounced at Borgia who was closest to it. Its actual target appeared to be the black chest that contained Sealed Artifact 2-049.

"Loss of control of Beyonder powers..." Dunn shouted in a deep voice. "Lorotta, it looks like a dead soul, so quickly look for its weakness!"

"Alright." Lorotta did not speak further as she raised her hands to press down on her eyes.

Her pupils turned gray then colorless, as though she had entered the world of spirits and a kingdom of dead souls. She looked down at the enemy from a higher vantage point as she searched for a "node."

Klein saw that a normal gunshot was ineffective, so he did not bother wasting more of his bullets. He lifted his hand to tap at his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision. He planned on helping Gravedigger Lorotta.

From his vision, Monster Bieber only had one kind of spiritual glow left. It was purely grayish-white, a whiteness filled with craziness.

Apart from that, Klein saw nothing else.

At that moment, Aiur Harson and Leonard Mitchell sang simultaneously.

"Oh, the threat of horror, the hope of crimson cries!

"One thing at least is certain—that this Life flies;

"One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;

"The Flower that once has bloomed forever dies..."

...

The power that allowed one to enter a peaceful slumber emanated. The twisted grayish-white monster gradually slowed down as though it could not fight against the charm of the poem.

Then, it opened its mouth and let out a shrill cry that ordinary people were deaf to.

"Ah!"

...

Bang! Klein felt a sharp pain in his head as he automatically exited his Spirit Vision state.

He felt warm liquid flowing out of his nose, and when he subconsciously wiped it with his hand, he discovered the back of his hand covered in blood.

Aiur and Leonard fell back to the ground at the same time. They had blood stains lining the corners of their lips, noses, and eyes.

Borgia, Dunn, and Lorotta each took a step or two back, the color in their face draining.

That monster only screamed once, but it appeared to exceed what the six Beyonders could withstand. They instantly turned extremely weak.

Bam!

It closed in on Borgia and suddenly swung its twisted joint.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Borgia and Dunn shot twice each, but they didn't cause any damage to Monster Bieber.

Bang! A blow sent Borgia flying out as his long-barreled revolver fell to the ground.

He tried to stand up a few times, but failed to do so.

The corner of Monster Bieber's mouth had stringy liquid oozing out as it leaped towards the black chest.

Bang!

At that crucial moment, Aiur Harson shot a bullet at the box to knock it some distance away, preventing Monster Bieber from grabbing it. Its momentum brought it forward by more than ten meters.

The black chest cracked and as the thumping within turned more intense it grew more obvious.

"Found it!" The black-haired Lorotta finally spoke. "I need you to control it for at least three seconds."

"Alright." Dunn didn't delay any further. He extended his hand to tap his glabella and closed his eyes.

He seemed to fall asleep as shapeless waves slowly rippled out one after another.

In that instant, Monster Bieber paused and the craziness in its eyes quickly receded. Its thin transparent eyelids began to close uncontrollably as well.

Dunn's body started quivering, and something popped up under his clothing and wriggled on the spot. It was as though he hid slippery scaleless snakes within.

Lorotta rushed over and with a roll, arrived under Monster Bieber.

She supported herself with one hand while raising a clenched fist, bombarding Monster Bieber's crotch like artillery.

Poof!

She ignored the corrosive pain but supported herself against the ground and directed more strength once again. She went higher a little as her fist drilled deeper in.

Rip! Lorotta pulled out her forearm as she dragged out an intestine filled with brownish-yellow blood stains.

In the intestine, there was an ancient notebook.

"Ah!"

Monster Bieber let out a blood-curdling scream, and his body suddenly lit up as though it was melting.

“Get down!”

Just as Aiur Harson’s hurried shout ended, Klein saw Monster Bieber suddenly swell up.

Boom!

Amid a loud explosion, the distant Klein was tossed into the air by the shockwave and landed heavily.

He struggled to stand against a swirling headache, and he saw Monster Bieber turn into a pile of disgusting, rotting flesh. Then he saw Dunn and Lorotta, who were a dozen meters away, looking like they had been knocked out.

Aiur Harson, Borgia, and Leonard Mitchell were on the ground too. Some groaning in pain, some struggling to stand up but failing.

Klein was just about to relax when he suddenly saw a familiar object about two or three meters away from him.

The black chest had stopped rolling, and the cracked surface was facing the sky.

A skinny brown arm extended out.

*Sealed Artifact... 2-049... F**k!* Klein’s heart tensed up as he immediately leaped in the opposite direction in a bid to escape 2-049’s effective range.

The blast from before had thrown the black chest near him!

And at that moment, Klein’s head suddenly buzzed as his thoughts turned sluggish.

Oh no! I've been controlled by the puppet!

Captain and company are either unconscious... or have yet to recover. They can't even get up... They will not be able to... wake me up in time...

No... I have to... save myself!

Everything before Klein's eyes was happening in slow motion. All his joints and his brain seemed to have been coated with an ever-thickening layer of glue.

He had no interest in becoming a human-version puppet, so he seized the opportunity of not being fully controlled by trying his best to seek a way to save himself.

I definitely can't... hit myself... There must be an... external force...

External force... I'll give it a try... There's no time for hesitation... Without the luxury of time to think through things, Klein came to an idea in less than three seconds. He moved his "rusty" knee joint and took a counterclockwise step.

At the same time, he did not try to escape the invisible rope that "hung" around his throat. All he did was recite inwardly.

The... Immortal Lord of... Heaven and Earth... for Blessings...

He wanted to use the mysterious world above the gray fog to awaken him and escape Sealed Artifact 2-049's assimilation!

Creak! Creak! Creak! Klein's knees and ankles let out an involved ear-piercing sound. With a slow contorted step, he took another step counterclockwise.

From The Sky Lord... of Heaven and Earth... for Blessings...

Klein's thoughts turned increasingly sluggish as he felt as though he was a computer that had all sorts of bloatware and every antivirus software installed. He lifted his left foot in a jerky manner as he took another step in the required spot.

The... Exalted Thearch...

Klein's thought processes turned more and more rigid and sluggish. He took the final step purely out of instinct.

At that point, he knew he was almost fully under the puppet's control. Even if Aiur Harson could get up in time to save him, he would probably be unable to be awakened.

But his strong desire to live made him chant the final line of the incantation.

The... Celestial... Worthy...

Just as he finished his incantation, the extremely chaotic and hysterical shouts and murmurs sounded. They quickly took over every corner of Klein's sluggish thoughts, shattering them in the process and reducing them to thoughts he had no control over.

Klein's brain became a boiling pot of potpourri as his stiff body turned light while his spirituality lifted.

Endless grayish-white fog and the dark red stars of varying distances appeared once again before his eyes. It was vast, mysterious, vague, and blurry.

Klein's confused mind quickly settled down as he finally regained his ability to think, only to see the magnificent palace.

"Phew... Thankfully, it worked." he whispered with a lingering fear.

According to his previous observations, he knew that once someone fell under the control of Sealed Artifact 2-049, it was equivalent to death. Normally, there was no medicine that could save the victim.

Luckily, his luck enhancement ritual and the mysterious world above the gray fog was not considered normal at all!

After pacing a few times, Klein began considering the situation he was in.

I can't just stay here the entire time, right?

By the time Captain and company wakes up and gathers over, I won't be able to explain the situation...

As things are right now, I only have the shell of my body, nothing more zombielike than a zombie...

But if I were to take the risk and return, there's no way to guarantee my safety... What if I get controlled by 2-049 again?

...

While suffering from his dilemma, Klein suddenly smacked himself in the forehead and could not help but chuckle softly. "It looks like I haven't gotten used to my status as a Seer!"

Before he finished his sentence, he appeared at the seat of honor in front of the long bronze table, sitting on the high-back chair with the strange symbol.

Klein extended his hand as a fountain pen appeared out of thin air.

He scribbled a sentence on an illusory piece of paper.

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

Immediately following that, Klein pulled out a projection of a spirit pendulum from his packet. After a few Gatherings, he discovered that the items he brought on him were projected above the gray fog, but they were relatively illusory.

Klein held the silver chain with his left hand as he allowed the topaz to nearly touch the paper.

He calmed his breathing and half closed his eyes. He calmly repeated the words on the piece of paper.

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

...

"Returning to the real world is very safe."

...

After repeating it seven times, Klein completed the divination with spirit dowsing.

He opened his eyes and saw the topaz slowly oscillating, guiding the silver chain in a clockwise spin.

Clockwise is an affirmation while counterclockwise is negative... Returning to the real world is very safe... Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he habitually stored the chain away. Then, he released his spirituality and wrapped his body as he simulated a plummeting state.

The hazy fog and deep red stars turned ethereal and charged upward. Klein soon saw himself still in a daze in his original position. He saw the brown puppet, halfway out of the chest. He also noticed that the Sealed Artifact had apparently stopped all motion.

His physical senses reached to his brain and just as he was about to try to move his arm to determine his condition, he suddenly heard a voice concealed within the wind.

"Do you wish to be awakened? You can be saved as long as you promise me one thing.

"This one thing is to help me take that Antigonus family notebook.

"Nod if you agree. I know you are still capable of completing that action."

Who is it? Yes... 2-049 doesn't seem like it's attempting to control me... That's right. It will not repeatedly influence the same person. There will be a break... Klein was shocked, but he did not show it on his face.

At that moment, the voice added quickly, "You can obtain additional rewards if you complete this matter. I know you are a Seer. I also know that the Church of Evernight does not have Sequence 8 that succeeds Sequence 9. But our Secret Order can give it to you.

"Heh, to be honest, I was a Seer before. If not, I wouldn't have dared return. To show you my sincerity, I can now tell you that the corresponding Sequence 8 of Seer is Clown."

Clown? Secret Order... Klein nearly did not maintain his "puppet" state.

He never made the connection between Seer and Clown.

Were they about to become the head honchos of a circus?

"Alright, make your choice. Believe me, you no longer have much time left to waste." The voice sounded with the wind again. The distant Dunn and Lorotta were still unconscious. Borgia seemed heavily injured as he moaned without moving. Aiur Harson and Leonard Mitchell were in relatively good shape as they attempted to sit up.

Why me? The Secret Order... Is it that suited clown from before? After he escaped, he secretly returned in a bid to fish in troubled waters... Upon hearing the voice, all sorts of doubts instantly flashed through Klein's mind.

Since the person said that he was a Seer, Klein attempted using the thought processes of a Seer to analyze the situation.

He dared return because he divined 'hope.' He believed that Monster Bieber would be destroyed and that we would suffer a heavy setback.

He did not take the notebook by himself or deal with us directly because he likely divined that it would contain immense risk. Therefore, he is suspecting Captain and Madam Lorotta are feigning their unconsciousness, or that this is a trap laid out for him.

He did not make further divinations to determine my present state partially because firstly, he might not have the time. If he waited any longer, Mr. Aiur Harson and company would have regained some of their combat strength. Secondly, he belittles me and thinks it unnecessary.

He understands a Seer very well and is confident that I'm unable to escape the puppet's control... He is using me as cannon fodder to probe for any traps...

From another angle, this also means that the luck enhancement ritual does not cause any abnormal appearances...

With his brain no longer sluggish, Klein felt that his line of reasoning was clear. He was quite confident of the thoughts and goals of the suited clown.

As for the clown's promise, he believed not one bit of it. Cannon fodder did not have any human rights!

As the thoughts flashed through his head, Klein controlled his neck and difficulty nodded.

As he did this action, he confirmed that he had escaped the control of Sealed Artifact 2-049.

Just after he nodded, a transparent "curtain" stirred two to three meters to his side. It revealed the suited clown who had his face painted with a clown's pastel colors. It was none other than the Secret Order member who had fled previously.

At that moment, as Klein had previously turned around in an attempt to leap out of 2-049's effective range, his back was facing the black chest and the puppet. The suited clown was in front of him to his

side. First, it was to stay away from the Sealed Artifact and second, to avoid his revolver's barrel. It was clear that he was very careful.

The suited clown pulled out a long paper slip from his pocket and shook it vigorously until it turned straight like a wooden pole.

He held the wooden pole and at a distance of two to three meters, he gave Klein's shoulder a prod in an attempt to wake him.

This fellow knows 2-049 very well. He knows that if the scent of an Antigonus family descendant is present, the puppet would go ballistic and control two at a time... He also knows that throwing a rock doesn't seem effective. At the very least, I've seen Captain and company attempt similar means... Although Klein did not know why 2-049 had stopped assimilating him again, he did not dare stay within five meters of it any longer. Therefore, he waited as he held his breath.

Just as the wooden pole was about to touch his shoulder, Klein suddenly raised his left hand and grabbed the edge of the pole and yanked it backwards.

The suited clown was caught by surprise as his body was pulled forward. He staggered a few steps forward as the gap between him and Klein contracted once again. He was now less than two meters away.

At the same time, the prepared Klein squeezed his right finger on the revolver's trigger.

Bang! Bang!

He shot twice but did not aim at the suited clown. Instead, he had aimed behind him, shooting to the side of Sealed Artifact 2-049!

Before the gunshot rang, the suited clown had taken the initiative to roll from his staggering state. He had instinctively backed off.

Klein released his hand which had grabbed the wooden pole as he took several steps away rapidly and rushed out the danger zone.

Just as the suited clown rolled twice and was about to jump backwards, his head went abuzz as his thoughts rapidly turned sluggish.

No good!

He forced me to... dodge in the direction of the Antigonus puppet!

I'm within... five meters...

How could he... not be... controlled by... the Antigonus... puppet...

...

The suited clown stopped from his rolling as he attempted to crawl out with his seemingly rusty joints.

At that moment, Klein had already turned around. He held his revolver with both hands as he aimed at the slowly-moving target.

To him, that was equivalent to shooting a fixed target.

Having seen the suited clown's battle with Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta, Klein knew that he was agile and good at rolling. Therefore, even when they were just a meter or two apart, he had carefully given up on shooting directly. Instead, he forced the clown to dodge to the "kill zone" he imagined—where Sealed Artifact 2-049 was!

If the puppet had been ineffective, the suited clown would have determined that he had fallen into a trap. He would then escape by leaping backwards and not pose any significant threat.

Bang!

Reflected into the indescribable eyes of the suited clown, the black-suited Klein pulled the trigger calmly.

Bang!

The silver bullet traversed the short distance of a few meters and accurately bore into the suited clown's neck. Large amounts of blood spewed out, dyeing his skin and bow tie red.

The suited clown was unable to let out a cry as his throat seemed to produce sounds of him gasping for breath. He wished to raise his arm to divert the fatal wound, but his joints appeared to be filled with glue. His motions were slow and jerky.

Bang!

Having entered a half-Cogitation state, Klein was not stunned by the appearance of blood. He pulled the trigger once again calmly, as though it was his usual daily practice.

A grisly hole appeared on the suited clown's forehead as crimson red spewed out. The luster in his eyes dimmed as the intricate revolver's might was far higher than what Klein had imagined to be.

As his knees buckled and his arms hung down, the suited clown gradually fell to the ground. His eyes were frozen with a dazed look.

His body convulsed a few times before it slowly relaxed and stopped moving.

Having delivered a headshot, Klein turned around in a cool manner. He spun his revolver and allowed the empty shells to fall down.

Then, dressed in his black formal suit and halved top hat, he walked towards Aiur Harson. He pulled out the final silver demon hunting bullet in his pocket and inserted it into the revolver's chamber.

The reason why he did not turn back to look at the suited clown's tragic fate was solely because of his discomfort with his first kill. However, it was necessary. He did not know what would happen if the suited clown was under the full control of the puppet.

Furthermore, he did not dare risk entering Sealed Artifact 2-049's effective range. After all, no one knew if something odd would happen that prevented his self-rescuing luck enhancement ritual to fail.

As for the items on the suited clown, Klein only cared if there was the so-called Clown potion formula or the relevant clues. However, this was not something he was in a hurry to carry out. In a while, he could do it together with Dunn, Aiur, and company. If the Nighthawks had it, it also practically meant that he had it. There was no way that they would be unwilling to share the potion formula of Sequence 8. At most, he would be required to accumulate his contributions over time. After all, he had only become a Seer recently; it would still be a long time until he fully digested it.

As his thoughts churned, Klein quickly walked next to Aiur Harson. The gentleman in his gray trench coat struggled to sit up but failed at every try. He was covered in dust and mud from the fall.

"Mr. Harson, what do you need me to do?" he asked, squatting down. He pointed the revolver in his hand at the ground in case of a misfire.

Aiur gasped for air and sighed.

"The monster was too strong; if not for its weakness..."

Then, he pointed at a sky-blue metal bottle beside him and said in a self-deprecating laugh, "I was trying to consume some medicine, but my hand shook..."

The sky-blue bottle was about the size of Klein's finger. It was not longer than five centimeters long and a cap that hid spiral patterns had fallen to the side. The liquid had completely spilled.

Klein reached out to pick up the bottle. As he looked at it with narrowed eyes, he answered helplessly, "Mr. Harson, there are only a few drops left in the bottle."

“Go to... Borgia and search his body. In his inner pockets.” Aiur said as he gasped for breath.

“Alright.” Klein stood up and casually asked, “Is this restorative medicine?”

An item from mysticism?

“No, it only has certain restorative effects. The main goal is to stimulate our minds and squeeze out the potential... of our bodies. It allows to maintain a decent state for a short period of time until we return, where we can receive treatment.” Aiur attempted to sit up only to fail again. “It’s name is the Goddess’s Gaze... Remember to let Borgia drink half a bottle.”

Klein did not delay any further as he turned around. He briskly arrived at Borgia who was groaning in pain. He found the uniform sky-blue metal bottle from the Nighthawk’s pocket.

After removing the cap, he carefully held the bottle to Borgia’s mouth.

Having sensed it, Borgia tried hard to open his lips.

The bottle was held up as dark red liquid flowed in Borgia’s mouth.

Klein estimated the quantity and stopped just in time. He then screwed the cap back on.

The medicine was rather effective. It only took Borgia a few seconds after drinking to regain the spirit in his eyes. Furthermore, he whispered, “Thank you.”

With that said, he pressed down on the ground as he slowly sat up. He first dealt with his wounds before walking to the unconscious Lorotta and Dunn. Then, he retrieved the Goddess’s Gaze from the latter’s inner pocket.

Klein returned to Aiur’s side and fed him the remaining half bottle.

After Aiur panted a few times, his actions suddenly became nimbler. He stood up as though he had never been injured.

“I’ll help Borgia. Help that partner of yours.” The gentleman with the charm of a middle-aged man pointed at Leonard Mitchell.

Klein had no objections to it. He turned around and jogged to the “poet,” Leonard.

“There’s no need. I can drink it by myself.” Leonard, with his disheveled hair, smiled as he raised the sky-blue bottle.

Upon seeing Leonard agilely get up by pushing up with one hand, Klein, who wanted to lampoon, was suddenly stunned.

Leonard’s injuries are lighter than I expected...

He had the ability to consume the medicine from the very beginning!

That also means that he could see me walk counterclockwise as I did the luck enhancement ritual!

No, that’s still alright. I had chanted inwardly and the luck enhancement ritual does not appear odd in any way, or the suited clown would not have fallen for it...

But even so, Leonard, who had long recovered but chose to watch by the sidelines, had seen quite a lot. Things like me not being affected by 2-049 and my sneak attack on the suited clown...

Just as Klein’s eyes narrowed slightly, Leonard, who was walking in his direction, stopped beside him and chuckled softly.

“I actually wanted to save you but discovered that you didn’t need it.

“Don’t mind it. There are many special people in this world that can always do things others can’t, such as you...”

“...and me.” Leonard smiled as he went past Klein and walked to the awakening Dunn and Lorotta.

Narcissist... Klein thought silently as he felt a lot more relaxed.

From the looks of it, Leonard Mitchell hid quite a bit of secrets... As he regrouped with the rest while deep in thought, he saw Captain Dunn wear a glove and pick up the Antigonus family notebook that was covered in yellowish-brown blood stains.

The notebook's cover was completely made of thick black paper. It suffused an aura from an ancient and distant time without any signs of softening or rotting. It was nearly identical to the one he saw in his dream. He even suspected that flipping it open would only make him see the Fool wearing splendid headgear.

However, he soon realized that he was overthinking things since Dunn had flipped open the notebook to make a final confirmation.

Klein was unable to discern the words on it due to his poor angle, but he was certain that there was no drawing of the Fool with his gorgeous clothes and splendid headdress.

"Ahem. There's nothing wrong with it." Dunn closed the notebook and held it securely. Then, he looked at Aiur and company. "Let's store this notebook and Sealed Artifact 2-049 behind Tingen's Chanis Gate. We can wait until all of you are recovered or Backlund sends someone over."

Upon hearing that, Klein felt a little disappointed once again, but also felt happy. He wished to see the Antigonus family's notebook once more and figure out the reason for the death of the original Klein, Welch, and Naya. However, he also felt that the ancient item was filled with misfortune. It often brought catastrophe, so he did not dare touch it.

Handing it to the Church's headquarters and sealing it is considered the best choice... He secretly heaved a sigh of relief.

"Alright." Aiur Harson, Borgia, and Lorotta nodded in unison. They then turned around and arrived beside Sealed Artifact 2-049.

They woke each other up and stuffed the puppet which had resumed moving into the black chest with an opening as they monitored it strictly.

"Everything is back to normal." Aiur sounded a little more relaxed.

Inside the dimly lit black chest, the puppet wrapped in oilstained cloth flipped over with its body creaking as it aligned its clown-painted face with the light source.

On the creepy face, under the black pupil-less eyes, two hardly noticeable crimson cracks appeared.

Meanwhile, Dunn, Leonard, and Klein, who had mustered his courage, began searching the suited clown's corpse. They found paper flowers, handkerchiefs, poker cards, glass pieces, and all sorts of strange items.

However, apart from that, he did not seem to carry anything of worth or potential clues.

Hmm, other than the wallet with seventy to eighty pounds and ten plus soli... Klein secretly sighed.

With money in mind, he immediately looked down and inspected himself. His face nearly fell literally.

His formal suit that cost several pounds had torn in five to six spots which required mending due to his rolling on the ground. Furthermore, it was covered in dust and dirt stains.

Dunn shot him a glance as the corner of his lips curved up.

"Losses during a mission can be reimbursed."

Reimbursed... Upon hearing the term "invented" by Emperor Roselle, Klein instantly felt wonderful.

Yeah. This suit just needs some proper cleaning and mending before it can be worn again. It will still be presentable...

When the reimbursement comes, I can buy another set and I can take turns wearing them!

Hmm, I am not the kind of person that uses a reimbursement for something other than what it was intended for...

However, I should consider getting a set of clothes for combat in the future, such as a black trench coat like Captain... Clothes with slightly poorer material would be much cheaper than a tuxedo... Tsk, has the reason why the bastard, Leonard, doesn't like wearing formal suits been due to him having such considerations...

"Let Frye take care of the dead body. We'll see if he can find what the man originally looked like or find any relevant clues." Dunn touched the suited clown's face paint with his gloves.

Then, they searched the innermost warehouse and saw that there were a splotches of bloody flesh that looked like they had been smashed by boulders. They also saw one white bone after another that had been strewn everywhere.

"Ray Bieber was absorbing the power in the notebook via an ancient ritual, just like how we would consume a higher-level Sequence potion. A ritual like that is full of danger. It must be performed in an environment isolated from all disturbances, and the ritual would have required him to enter a deep sleep for a certain amount of time. That was probably why he had yet to leave Tingen." Dunn guessed at the possibilities after inspecting the warehouse.

Upon hearing such a description, Lorotta laughed. Her black hair contrasted sharply with her pale face.

"Such a pity, we awakened him ahead of time. His anger at being woken up truly left a deep impression on us."

"This is a kind of losing control," Dunn looked towards Klein and told him, as both an explanation and a lecture.

"Why didn't he just leave Tingen and try to absorb it elsewhere?" asked a perplexed Klein.

Aiur laughed and pointed to his head.

"People influenced by ancient or sinister powers often are lacking in this department."

At that moment, Dunn inhaled and said while hiding his pain, "Leonard, you are still in good condition. Stay here and do not allow ordinary people to come close... The rest of us will immediately search for items among Ray Bieber's remains. We will return with them and the Sealed Artifact, as well as the Antigonus family's notebook. We will then get Frye, Royale, and the police to come here."

"Alright," answered Leonard with a relaxed expression when he heard Dunn's suggestion.

Following that, everyone walked out of the warehouse and came close to where Monster Bieber had "self-destructed." With him at the origin, they began searching outwards radially.

"Captain, what are we looking for?" Klein looked at the rotting flesh and blood that was strewn everywhere. He held back his urge to retch as he looked at Dunn Smith beside him ponderingly.

Dunn did not look up. Instead, he used his deep gray eyes to sweep the ground.

"Awakening ahead of time, losing control, and becoming a monster. This means that Ray Bieber did not fully absorb the Beyonder powers provided by the notebook. It also means that a part of his body is considered extraordinary, making it prime material."

"If you ever encounter something similar, make sure not to miss out on doing a search. It might be a relatively important item." *So that's the case...* Klein nodded slightly in enlightenment.

In the blink of an eye, he thought of another matter.

If the part where Monster Bieber had concentrated the Beyonder powers were some indescribable part, wouldn't that be awkward... Wouldn't it be extremely disgusting to concoct it into a potion...

Just as Klein's mind wandered, Borgia with his sharp eagle-like eyes suddenly shouted.

"Found it. Ahem."

Dunn and company immediately turned and closed in. Driven by his curiosity, Klein walked over to Borgia with a quickened pace.

Soon, he saw the item before Borgia. It was a grayish-white item about the size of a fist. Its surface was filled with gullies and it looked soft but ductile. It looked like a brain that had been extracted out of a living being.

Although Klein was unable to make out the extraordinariness of the blob of grayish-white, he was certain that Borgia had not made a mistake since it had remained intact despite the violent explosion it had undergone.

Dunn carefully observed it and squatted down. As he extended and bent his right arm, he used his black-gloved left hand to carefully grab the grayish-white item.

The moment it was touched, the blob of grayish-white immediately spread out into an extremely sticky liquid.

At that moment, Aiur Harson took out a tin-colored square case, removed the cigarettes from them and placed them into his pocket.

Then, he handed the square case to Dunn and smiled.

"I know, you only like pipes."

Dunn chuckled and took the square case. Then, he "poured" the grayish-white sticky liquid into the case for temporary storage.

After storing it away, everyone did a cursory sweep of the area.

After confirming that they had not missed out anything, they left. When they came out, they saw the horses digging their hooves into the ground, clearly spooked and nervous. They had nearly escaped their reins.

"I'll drive." Borgia covered his mouth with his hand and coughed softly.

“I know you are good at placating animals,” said Aiur with a smiling nod.

After boarding the carriage, Dunn, Lorotta, Aiur Harson, and Klein, who continued their “arm exercises,” temporarily had nothing to say as they fell into silence.

When the trotting of the horses sounded while the carriage wheeled off, Dunn looked at Klein and deliberated over his words before saying, “I know you are filled with curiosity about the Antigonus family’s notebook. You wish to understand what happened.”

No, not at all... Klein subconsciously denied.

It was an ancient relic filled with misfortune!

Without giving him time to answer, Dunn continued and said, “However, I have to first report this to the Holy Cathedral. Only after they determine the confidentiality level of the notebook can we consider if this can be shown to you.”

“No problem.” Klein gave a short and simple reply.

Dunn continued his arm exercises as he thought before saying, “I once promised that you can be made a formal member of the Nighthawks when we confirm that Ray Bieber is a descendant of the Antigonus family clan. Now, not only have we determined Ray Bieber’s identity, we have even eliminated the monster and spoiled the Secret Order’s conspiracy.

“In this entire process, your performance was outstanding. You personally killed a member of an evil organization. Therefore, I will fulfill my promise and immediately make an application to the Holy Cathedral. We’ll wait for their approval.

“Right, I forgot something important. I still need to ask if you are agreeable to it.

“Mr Klein Moretti, are you willing to formally join the Tingen Nighthawks as one of its members? Your salary will increase severalfold, reaching six pounds a week. Furthermore, you will get a raise every subsequent year.

“Your salary will be paid by the Church and Awwa County’s Police Department equally. You will also gain the identity of a probationary inspector. It will be very useful at times.

“As a support-type Beyonder, you do not always need to face enemies, but you will have to guard Chanis Gate once a week...

“Without the squad’s permission, you are not to leave Tingen. Furthermore, you have to keep this a secret from your family...”

...

By the time Dunn finished listing the restrictions and benefits, Klein was already thinking deeply for more than ten seconds.

“I wish to become a formal Nighthawk.”

Only by doing so could he continue to gain more access to mystery, such as the situation regarding the Secret Order!

After reading the gathered Roselle diaries, Klein had some changes in thoughts about himself. “Being skilled in mysticism knowledge to seek a way home was an immutable goal of his. Raising his strength further to more safely make the mysterious space above the gray fog do his bidding before using it to return home was a new addition to his goals.

Just as Emperor Roselle said, simply relying on external powers was very dangerous!

Furthermore, after becoming a Seer and obtaining Beyonder powers, Klein sensed that he had a better grasp of the mysterious space. For example, he could pull another person into the Gathering.

This forced him to consider what possibly beneficial changes would happen to the mysterious space above the gray fog when he reached Sequence 8, Sequence 7, or an even higher Sequence.

Of course, Klein knew very well that this was built on the premise that he completely resolved the side effects of the Seer potion. He could not rush or be rash.

“Very well. Once the Holy Cathedral approves of it, you will become one of us.” Dunn’s gray eyes were tinted with a hint of joy.

At that moment, Aiur Harson, who was listening in, interrupted.

“Klein, don’t mind me calling you Klein. Your performance today was really excellent. You managed to kill a Beyonder from the Secret Order. I even suspect that he has reached Sequence 7. How did you do it? I really find it incredulous.”

The question has finally been raised... Having long prepared for it, Klein acted as though he was organizing his thoughts.

He knew that it was indeed incredible and enigmatic that he had killed a Beyonder that ran rings around Dunn, Aiur, and Lorotta. Aiur and company were not blind or dumb, so it was a matter of time before they inquired about the process. However, he never expected them to wait till this moment.

That’s right. Captain and Mr. Harson were previously injured and their situations could have worsened at any time. At that moment, any matter that could result in conflict had to be put on hold. It was to prevent me from acting desperately because of my exposed “secret.” Only after I expressed my attitude and showed that I was willing to be a Nighthawk were they at ease enough to ask... How crafty. They did not have any obvious communication between themselves, but they had made the same tacit decision...

Klein answered as though in thought, “It’s an extremely lucky event. The clown in the tuxedo had made a fatal misjudgment.

“Back then, Sealed Artifact 2-049 was thrown near me as a result of the explosion’s blast. It looked about five to six meters from me, but it was only a crude observation. It was very easy to come to the conclusion that I was within the Sealed Artifact’s area of influence.

“And back then, I was feeling faint because of the explosion. My actions turned sluggish and looked as though I was being controlled.

“It was unknown when that suited clown came close to me in an invisible state. He tried to entice me by offering to save me and the corresponding Sequence 8, Clown, of the Seer potion. He wanted me to help him retrieve the Antigonus family’s notebook. Right, he said that the Secret Order is in control of the Seer potion’s corresponding Sequence pathway and that he was once a Seer.”

...

Klein recounted the situation back then in detail. He even described the theories he had back then, including how he believed that the suited clown had divined that taking the notebook would be an extremely risky endeavor; thus, he had changed his plans.

Of course, all the truths were used to conceal the lie made in the beginning—that he had been controlled by Sealed Artifact 2-049.

“Divined that it was extremely risky to retrieve the notebook? Yes, it’s indeed highly risky. However, the risk was actually because of you,” said Lorotta with a chuckle as she covered her mouth. “His divination was right, but it caused him to end up in a fatal situation. This sure is an interesting account.” Klein was taken aback before he nodded seriously.

“Indeed. Divination is never crystal clear. And that vagueness only means that an interpretation can be wrong.” *Yes, I have to take note of that!*

“How did you finish him off after that?” asked Dunn while he did his arm exercises and leaned back.

Klein smiled.

“I pretended to agree to him and made him awaken me. However, he did not dare enter the effective range of the Sealed Artifact. He stayed two to three meters away and used a strange paper slip in an attempt to push me.

“I seized the opportunity and pulled at his paper slip, causing him to be thrown into 2-049’s effective range. I then complemented it with repeated shots and completed my goal. Heh, it’s quite an embarrassing matter for me. I didn’t even have the confidence of hitting him despite being only two to three meters away from him.” Aiur nodded slightly.

“With his evasive abilities, a distance of two to three meters is not an absolute guarantee. You might be able to strike him but fail to hit him in a vital spot. That would only make things worse... Your choice back then was impeccable. It can even be said to be outstanding. If I were in your shoes, I might not have been able to do it better than you.”

He did not ask further. After all, the suited clown’s entry into the Sealed Artifact 2-049’s area of influence basically sealed his fate. He became a living target.

“The subsequent Sequence of Seer is Clown... How odd...” Dunn suddenly said with a sigh.

Aiur Harson added, “Exactly, it is hard to imagine that the subsequent Sequence of Seer would be Clown. According to normal logic, no one would link them together.”

“Is that strange? I remember that quite a number of Sequence potions also seem to lack similarities between their different levels.” Lorotta covered her mouth as she yawned. It was obvious that her injuries were more severe. Not even Goddess’s Gaze could help her to maintain her vibrant energy.

“No, Lorotta. This is completely different. Even if the other Sequence potions are lacking a connection, we can also find common points if viewed from a different angle. However, I cannot comprehend it for Seer and Clown at all,” said Aiur Harson as he shook his head and sighed.

Klein listened to their discussion and laughed.

“No, there’s still a common point.”

“What?” Aiur asked curiously. Even Dunn’s arm exercises clearly slowed down.

Klein replied without hesitation, “Be it a Seer or a Clown, both of them can be found at the circus.”

“...” Aiur, Dunn, and Lorotta were stunned.

“Pfft... Quite a good answer. I like young man like you!” Lorotta was the first to return to her senses as she burst out laughing.

Aiur also smiled as he shook his head.

“In this era, the number of gentlemen who are equipped with the spirit of self-deprecation is decreasing. Thankfully, we have met one today.”

Do you think I like to engage in self-deprecation... It’s not like I figured out any commonality between the two... Klein complained internally as he replied with a wry smile, “I only wish that the potions of the Sequence pathway would not have names like Beast Tamer, Acrobat, or Magician. That would really form a circus.”

Furthermore, it’s a one-man circus...

“Haha.” Dunn and company were immediately amused. It filled the carriage with a joyous atmosphere.

The carriage proceeded straight for Zouteland Street. Klein, who was not injured, was the first to enter Blackthorn Security Company.

“Goddess! What happened to you? Why are you like that?” Rozanne exclaimed when she caught sight of him.

Klein looked down at his dirty and tattered suit. He replied with his heart aching, “There are always all kinds of accidents during a mission. Thankfully, the Goddess blessed us and it ended beautifully.”

“Praise the Lady!” Rozanne devoutly drew the crimson moon across her chest.

Before waiting for Klein to continue, she asked, “Do you need us to hide in the third floor again? Is the Sealed Artifact really that dangerous?”

“Trust me. It’s far more dangerous than you can imagine,” replied Klein with a lingering fear.

If not for his even more mysterious luck enhancement ritual, he would have perished under the proverbial hands of 2-049!

“Goddess...” Rozanne’s lips quivered as though she had still a million things to say or questions to ask, but in consideration of how the captain was waiting downstairs, she held back her compulsion. She informed Mrs. Orianna and company to head upstairs to the third floor. The neighbors of Blackthorn Security Company were either estates of the Church, or devout clergymen who vaguely knew of the situation.

When all the civilian staff dispersed, Klein did not rush to the recreation room to inform the other Nighthawks. He immediately returned and helped the captain and the rest escort Sealed Artifact 2-049, Monster Bieber's remnants, and the Antigonus family's notebook to the second floor.

Through the partition, Dunn pushed open the recreation room's door and said to the two Nighthawks who were playing Gwent cards, "Frye, Royale, both of you are to immediately head to the harbor's Tyrell Warehouse and aid Leonard in dealing with the aftermath."

"Alright." Royale with her raven-black hair and cold expression was the first to stand up.

Corpse Collector Frye, with his black hair, blue eyes, and pale skin stood up next.

They put down their Gwent cards and walked out the recreation room and when they passed through the partition, they clearly paused.

"Wait," Dunn shouted, not letting down their expectations.

"What else is there?" Sleepless Royale turned her head back and asked without an expression.

"Remember to inform the police. Let them seal off the road. Prevent anyone from coming close until you are done with the scene and move the corpse back," Dunn said, smacking his forehead.

"Alright." Royale turned around and took two steps before pausing once again.

She turned her head, blinked and confirmed coldly, "Captain, is there nothing else?"

"No," Dunn answered categorically.

Royale nodded unnoticeably and walked towards the entrance.

As for Corpse Collector Frye who exuded coldness and darkness, he maintained his adequate pace.

At that moment, Dunn added, "Remember to tell Rozanne, Mrs.

Orianna, and company that they can come down."

"No problem." Frye calmly replied as though no emotions stirred in him.

Klein watched as the two Nighthawks walked out the door and went upstairs before heaving a secret sigh of relief. He followed the captain and the rest underground. They proceeded straight to Chanis Gate.

As Dunn gestured for Sleepless Kenley to open Chanis Gate, he instructed Klein, "Go to the armory and get Old Neil here. We need his ritualistic magic to heal ourselves."

As the effects of the medicine began to wear off, his mental state gradually waned.

"Alright." Klein did not wait for the captain to continue, as he added, "I will watch the armory in Old Neil's place. I will also request for at least twenty demon hunting bullets and also wait for the Holy Cathedral's approval, curbing my curiosity about the Antigonus family's notebook."

"..." Dunn was instantly at a loss for words.

"Captain, is there anything else?" asked Klein with a smile after beating Dunn to it.

Dunn shook his head and remained speechless.

He pulled out his cane and turned around. After walking a certain distance, Klein turned into the armory and recounted the happenings generally to Old Neil who was drinking plain water.

"He became a monster that lost control... You even killed a Beyonder?" Old Neil quickly tidied up his desk. "It's like I'm listening to the script of a play."

He mumbled as he circled around the desk and walked straight towards the corridor without waiting for Klein's answer.

Klein asked out of curiosity, “Mr. Neil, doesn’t the Church have real restorative medicine? Why would ritualistic magic be needed?”

“No medicine made with ordinary ingredients can provide the permanent restorative effects of a ritual. Extraordinary ingredients are very rare, and most of them are not suitable for restorative medicine,” Old Neil explained casually. “You should know about Goddess’s Gaze, right? When the medicine is first made via a ritual, it would be a standard, real restorative medicine. But every minute after its completion, its effect

evaporates until little of its efficacy is left.” “I see...” Klein nodded disappointedly.

As a former “keyboard warrior” and avid gamer, it was a habit to yearn for a medicine with magical healing properties.

He watched Old Neil leave and sat down, taking in the tranquility that he had not had in a very long time.

In the midst of his peace, he recalled the tragic death of the suited clown. He recalled himself shooting coldly, the gruesome wound and the spewing of fresh blood.

Klein’s body shivered as he felt discomfort. He first stood up, then sat down, then slowly repeated the process. He also did some pacing back and forth in between.

Phew... He let out a breath and decided to occupy himself with something so that he could stop thinking of those negative images.

Klein took off his silk hat and formal suit. He then took out a handkerchief and a brush to clean off the dirt and mud.

After an uncertain amount of time, he heard Old Neil’s familiar footsteps. Old Neil’s gait involved him walking on his heels, and it made a distinctive noise as he ambled down the hall.

“How tiring...” Old Neil complained as he walked into the room.

“Tell the rest that no one is to come here within the next hour. I need to rest,” he instructed casually, glancing towards Klein.

“Why don’t you rest upstairs, and I keep watch here?” Klein suggested out of kindness.

Old Neil shook his head.

“It’s too noisy upstairs. Rozanne is a lady who just can’t stop talking.”

“Alright.” Klein did not insist. He put on his coat and hat, picked up his cane, and returned to the corridor. Then, he pulled the armory’s door ajar.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He slowly walked on the empty path when he suddenly saw many rooms he had never seen previously by the side.

“There is a secret door here...” Klein stopped at a spot around a bend as he looked at the room.

He discovered that Corpse Collector Frye had already returned. He was carefully examining a completely dissected corpse.

Corpse? Klein’s heart stirred as he mustered his courage and approached the room. He knocked lightly on the opened door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Frye stopped his actions and turned around, looking over with his blue but ice-cold eyes.

“Sorry for disturbing you. I just wish to know if this is a corpse of a Beyonder,” asked Klein as he controlled his tone.

“Yes.” Frye’s lips opened and closed, but only spat out a single word.

Klein’s gaze reached beyond him and landed on the corpse. Indeed, he discovered the familiar gruesome wound on the forehead.

It’s that suited clown... Klein secretly exhaled and said, “Any discoveries?”

“No,” answered Frye in an abnormally simple manner.

The mood instantly turned awkward. Just as Klein was about to bade farewell, Frye took the initiative to say, “If you feel uncomfortable, you can come in to take a look. You will discover that it’s only a corpse.”

Afraid that I’ll be traumatized? Klein nodded in thought.

“Alright.”

He entered the room and came in front of the long white-clothed table as he looked at the corpse.

The suited clown’s red, yellow, and white paint had been cleaned off, revealing an unfamiliar face that did not look anything special. He was in his thirties and had black hair and a high nose bridge.

At that moment, Frye went to a square table by the corner of the wall and picked up a pencil and piece of paper.

He returned to the corpse and placed the paper down and began drawing with the pencil.

Klein glanced at it in curiosity and found that Frye was sketching the suited clown’s head.

It did not take long before Frye stopped moving the pencil. On the piece of paper, there was a lifelike portrait. Compared to the corpse, the only difference was the lack of a wound with the addition of blue eyes.

What a talented genius... Klein marveled in surprise.

“I never expected you to be that good at sketching.”

“My dream was to become an artist before becoming a

Nighthawk.” Frye’s tone was completely placid.

“Then why don’t you fulfill your dreams?” asked Klein curiously.

Frye put down his pencil and said with the suited clown’s portrait in hand, “My father was a priest of the Goddess. He wished that I become a priest. It’s a presentable job.” “You became a priest?” Klein asked in surprise.

He found it unimaginable that Frye could become a priest with his personality and the vibes he exuded.

“Yeah, I did quite an okay job.” Frye wore a cold expression as the corners of his mouth curled up a little as he replied. “Later, I encountered and experienced some things and ended up a Nighthawk.”

Klein did not plan on infringing on his privacy, so he asked, “You were once a priest of the Goddess, so why not choose to be a Sleepless?”

“A personal reason,” answered Frye frankly. “Furthermore, Madam Daly is a good role model.”

Klein nodded and just as he was about to change the subject, he heard Frye say, “Help me watch this room. I have to immediately hand the sketch to Captain... Closing a secret door is very troublesome.”

“Alright.” Although Klein was a little afraid facing a corpse alone, he braved his fear in agreement.

With Frye gone, the room turned quiet. The corpse laid there as Klein’s heart turned heavy.

He took a few breaths and, in a bid to defeat his fears, approached the long table.

The suited clown lay there silently with his pale face. His eyes were tightly shut, and he had lost all signs of breathing. Apart from the gruesome wound, he emitted the unique coldness of a dead man.

Klein observed for a moment as his emotions gradually settled as he was calming down.

He swept his gaze and discovered a strange brand on the suited clown's wrist. Gathering his courage, he extended his hand to touch it, hoping to turn it around to see it more clearly.

Just as the ice-cold touch reached from Klein's fingertips to his brain, the pale palm that had lost all vibrancy shot up suddenly, grabbing him by the wrist.

It grabbed at his wrist tightly!

Klein instantly felt his hair stand on end as the icy hand tightened around his wrist. He instinctively pulled his wrist back in a desperate attempt to escape.

A heavy sensation bore down on him as Klein used every fiber of strength in his entire body to yank his arm back.

Bam!

The pale, naked corpse was yanked so forcefully to the side that it fell from the autopsy table.

However, the white, ice-cold fingers' grip remained firmly latched onto Klein's wrist.

Klein momentarily lost the ability to think; the only thought that went through his mind was to draw his revolver and riddle the corpse in holes.

However, as he could not retract his dominant hand, he threw his black cane and desperately tried to retrieve his revolver from his holster to no avail.

At that moment, the corpse's eyes rose, revealing a pair of calm, blue eyes.

His mouth moved as he muttered, "Hornacis... Hornacis...

Hornacis..."

After those three words were said, Klein was completely flustered as he felt that the fingers gripping onto his wrist began to loosen before dropping limp.

The suited clown's eyes were shut once again, as though nothing had happened at all.

If the pale corpse wasn't lying on the stone floor, Klein would have imagined that he had been struck by a hallucination spell.

He staggered backwards a few steps and felt that most of his body was trembling as a result of the shock and fear.

Phew... Phew... Klein gasped for air as he slowly regained control of his mental facilities. He looked at the corpse on the ground in alarm and fear.

He drew his revolver and carefully retreated from the room, one step at a time. After confirming that the corpse was motionless, he took a glance at his wrist of the hand holding onto his revolver.

There were five deep, red finger marks imprinted on his wrist. They silently described his encounter.

Klein calmed down as vulgarities filled his mind.

*F*cking hell. I almost died from the shock!*

After panting for more than ten seconds, he began assembling items in his mind to quickly compose himself.

He carefully recalled everything that he encountered and pieced them together.

Although he did not understand the reason for the suited clown's "resurrection," he acutely noticed an important point. The corpse had repeated the words "Hornacis!"

"It's Hornacis again..." Klein knitted his brows. "The Antigonus family's notebook has records of a Nation of the Evernight in the Hornacis mountain range. While in Cogitation or Spirit Vision, I would hear sounds that I shouldn't be able to hear, and among those sounds is the word 'Hornacis'... Is the answer to all these questions on the Hornacis mountain range?... There might be massive danger lurking there. For example, an evil god might be sealed within and was using various forms of 'attraction' to achieve freedom."

While considering this, Klein carefully entered the room and touched the corpse a few times to verify that it was completely dead.

He didn't want Corpse Collector Frye to see him mess up the place, so he mustered his courage to move the corpse back onto the autopsy table.

Klein couldn't help but feel as though his heart was in his mouth throughout the process. The slightest movement could snap his tense nerves. Furthermore, the ice-cold feeling given out by the corpse felt particularly disgusting.

After finishing the mission with great difficulty, he recalled the reason he approached the corpse. Therefore, he focused on the suited clown's wrist and looked at the strange brand.

It was unknown when the brand had slipped off, shrinking into a spherical blob of blood which had tint of blue.

The spherical blob of blood was the size of a thumb. It floated in midair silently in defiance of the laws of physics.

"What is this?" Klein muttered, but he didn't dare to touch it rashly.

He had no intention of hiding the strange blood sphere. Firstly, he didn't know if it was a good or bad thing. Secondly, he was certain that Frye, who had examined the corpse, would have long discovered the brand on the wrist. It was even likely that he knew what the strange blood sphere was.

And even if Frye doesn't know, reporting it to Captain and letting the Nighthawks research it is definitely better than me making random attempts... That was Klein's train of thought.

Being in an organization meant he had to know how to make use of the organization's powers to its fullest.

Klein waited nervously for a few minutes before he saw the black-haired, blue-eyed, and thin-lipped Frye return.

He instantly noticed the strange blood sphere, and asked Klein a question he had previously asked himself.

"What is this?"

"No idea." Klein shook his head honestly. He recounted what had happened without hiding anything.

"The brand slipped off into a blood sphere..." Frye nodded, seemingly deep in thought. "The corpse of a Beyonder always tends to have some strange transformations..."

He looked up and said to Klein, "Bring the Captain here. Inform him about the contents that the corpse

murmured as well." "Alright." Klein was already itching to leave.

"You don't have to return with the Captain," Frye added. "I believe you won't like to see what happens next."

As he spoke, he picked up a silver surgical knife beside him.

Klein nodded with some lingering fear.

"I was hoping you'd say that."

He picked up his cane, wore his hat and hobbled over to the Chanis Gate. At the Keeper's room, he saw the no longer frail Captain Dunn.

After Dunn heard his recollection of what happened, he nodded indiscernibly.

"I'll report the matter to the higher ups and let the Holy Cathedral deal with it. Maybe they'll send people to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range to take a look."

Klein answered briefly in confirmation. Seeing that only

Sleepless Kenley and the Captain were in the Keeper's room, he casually asked, "Are Mr. Aiur and the others resting?"

Dunn nodded and said, "Aiur and Borgia are at Saint Selena Cathedral. Lorotta is probably looking for a coffee shop."

"Coffee shop? Madam Lorotta hasn't recovered from her injuries, right?" Klein asked in surprise.

Dunn massaged his nose bridge and said with a laugh, "Lorotta has three hobbies—coffee, dessert, and maidservants. She says she needs these three things to speed up her recovery." "Maidservants?" Klein asked, perplexed.

Does Madam Lorotta have a particular fetish?

Dunn shook his head helplessly and said, "She likes maidservants. Yeah, that's right. Furthermore, she likes ones with big breasts."

"...She sure is weird." Klein had no idea what kind of expression he should show in response.

Dunn didn't delay any further as he headed out the Keeper's room. As Klein watched his back, he silently waited for him to turn.

Meanwhile, he noticed at the corner of his eye that Sleepless Kenley had fished out his pocket watch and opened it.

Three, two, one... The moment Klein finished counting down silently, Dunn stopped and turned around.

"Another thing I forgot. Klein, you went through a lot today. Once you relax, you'll feel exhausted. There's no need for you to be here in the afternoon. Go back and get some rest. Tomorrow, I'll submit the application listing the detailed losses."

"Alright. Don't worry too much about your killing of a Beyonder. Killing him was equivalent to saving more lives."

"As a matter of fact, I'm actually feeling much better." Klein silently exhaled.

Dunn nodded slightly and just as he turned around, he smacked himself in the forehead.

"I've also handed the Beyonder's sketch to Leonard. He and the police department are in charge of the follow up investigations. I believe that the Beyonder must've rode on carriages, eaten food, and had somewhere to stay.

"Wherever he steps, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves behind, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him. Emperor Roselle's words are truly sensible." "...Yes." Klein answered, stupefied.

After the captain walked far away, he left the Keeper's room and slowly walked to the second floor.

Along the way, he suddenly recalled something as he experienced an additional bout of fear.

That suited clown claimed that the Secret Order controlled the corresponding Sequence pathway of Seers... Even if he was exaggerating and they didn't have the higher Sequence potion formulas, they definitely have the lower Sequence ones.

It also means that they have a number of Seers.

Then, wouldn't they divine that I killed the suited clown and secretly exact revenge against me?

If they can't deal with the Nighthawks, can't they deal with me, a Seer without any direct measures against enemies?

Klein stopped in the stairwell and began thinking about the problem seriously. Soon, he discovered that he was worrying over nothing.

Firstly, the Secret Order doesn't know who are members of the Nighthawks.

Secondly, even if they know one or two, they definitely wouldn't include a civilian staff member like me.

Thirdly, under the present circumstances, unless they have a prophet, there's no way they can divine who the murderer is.

He heaved a sigh of relief and left the Blackthorn Security Company. He took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

Even though he hadn't eaten lunch yet, he still lacked the appetite.

After entering his bedroom, Klein removed his damaged suit first. Then, he took off his half top hat, got into bed and tried to go to sleep.

His mind remained active as though his entire existence couldn't relax. His mind wasn't repeating the scene of him shooting the suited clown to death, but of the scene of him moving the corpse, and that hair-raising experience.

He no longer felt uncomfortable about killing for the first time, but more of a disgust when he thought about it.

"This was probably Frye's goal. He hoped that I would approach the corpse and face it directly to overcome my trauma... But, even though the trauma from before is gone, I've been traumatized by something new..." Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh as he gradually felt his nerves calm down.

He had no idea when he dozed off, but when he woke up, his stomach was groaning in protest.

"I feel like I can eat an entire horse!" Klein muttered as he looked at the sun setting in the west as though the sky was alit.

Changing into old but comfortable casual clothes, he briskly walked to the first floor. Before he could consider what to make for dinner, he heard the door open.

Melissa... The corners of his mouth curled up at the thought.

Ever since she began taking the public carriage, his sister no longer returned home late.

The key twisted as the door opened. Melissa walked in with her bag that contained her books and stationery.

She looked at the kitchen and said, "Klein, there's a letter for you. It's from your mentor."

A letter from Mentor? Right. I wrote to him asking about the relevant historical situation of the Hornacis main peak... Klein was taken aback at first before he recalled the matter.

CHAPTER 80: BANQUET INVITATION

After having dinner, a satiated Klein casually lounged on the living room sofa. He used a small letter opener to open the letter he received from his mentor.

Melissa was sitting by the dining table at the time, working hard on a textbook problem, with the gas lamp for illumination. Benson was cradled in a single seater, reading Accountancy for Beginners.

Klein found three pages in the letter that he read with both fear and anticipation.

"...very happy to receive your letter. It reminds me of the good old days over the past few years. Unfortunately, Welch and Naya have left us forever..."

"I attended their burials separately and could feel their parents' anguish. The two of them were young adults who were supposed to have beautiful, bright futures ahead of them..."

"Fate is always so unpredictable. No one can know what will happen to you next. I've experienced more as I've grown older, and I can increasingly sense the weakness and helplessness of humanity."

"...Regarding the historical information revolving around the Hornacis main peak, I recall that the archaeologist, Mr. John Joseph, once published a monograph detailing it. It includes his accounts of his time at the Hornacis main peak. He discovered a few ancient buildings that are more than a thousand years old." "What shames every historian and archaeologist is our inability to precisely date the era. We can only make a crude estimate based on the architecture style, the characteristics of the murals, and a few of the texts that we can decipher."

"It's quite unbelievable that such a tall mountain peak would have humans living there. Mr. Joseph has ample evidence to prove that those humans developed a civilization that they can call their own. As for the details, it is hard to fully describe them in this letter. I suggest you try borrowing this monograph from the Deweyville Library. Trust me, Sir Deweyville's donation to this library makes it have more books in its collection than the one built by the city government."

"The monograph's title is Research of the Hornacis Main Peak's Relics. It is published by the Loen Publishing Firm."

"In addition, there are some papers that discuss something of relevance. They are published in the journals—New Archeology, Archeology Summary. The exact issue and journal volume is..."

...

Klein read every word, and repeated the names of the monograph and paper names silently.

Immediately afterwards, he found some paper and an envelope, as well as a fountain pen before penning his gratitude.

"Melissa, help me send this letter out. This is the money for the stamps." Klein placed the sealed envelope and more than enough money for the stamps on his sister's desk.

Melissa took a glance and curled her lips.

"Klein, stamps don't cost that much."

"Yes, stamps don't, but a girl should have some allowance." Klein replied with a smile. "I believe Selena has mentioned this to you before."

Noticing that Melissa was about to protest, he quickly added, "It can be used to buy the materials and tools you need."

"Tools..." Melissa repeated softly again and again before casting her gaze back onto her books. "Alright," she said as she nodded imperceptibly.

The corners of Klein's mouth immediately curved upwards as he briskly walked back to the sofa.

“Excellent persuasion skills. You precisely pinpointed Melissa’s weakness.” Benson gave a thumbs up as he said with a suppressed laugh. Klein cleared his throat and said in all seriousness.

“Then how shall I persuade you? Your self-study should emphasize language and ancient literature. Of course, basic mathematics and logic are equally important.”

According to the curriculum of the public schools and grammar schools, as well as the material tested for in college admissions, Klein was very confident about the general direction in which the upcoming ‘civil servant examinations’ would focus on.

Benson touched his hairline and said with a self-deprecating smile, “I feel like a curly-haired baboon

in front of those books.” “But they’re really useful,” Klein said with a determined smile.

At that moment, Melissa put down her fountain pen, stood up, and walked to the sofa.

“Benson, Klein. This Sunday is Selena’s birthday. She and her parents wish to invite all of us to their place for a banquet. Are both of you free?”

“Should be fine for me,” Klein said after some thought.

He could take the opportunity to be acquainted with his sister’s friends. It could prevent him from being utterly clueless whenever something happened to her.

“Me too,” Benson said as he combed his hairs with his fingers. “It looks like we’ll have to think of a birthday present for Miss Selena.”

Klein smiled.

“This should be left to Melissa. She knows Miss Selena better than us. Besides, what we need to do is what a gentleman ought to do—pay for it.”

“This is the first time I’ve heard someone describe laziness in such a pleasant manner,” Benson said as he shook his head and chuckled.

Klein returned with a smile.

“This is the purpose of language and ancient literature.”

“...” Benson never expected Klein to return to the subject at hand; it left him momentary speechless.

...

The next day, Klein wore his cheap formal suit and held his black inlaid silver cane as he climbed up the stairs and arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company’s entrance. His tuxedo had already been sent to the tailors.

Klein was just about to greet Rozanne when he saw Captain Dunn walk out of the partition.

“Good morning Klein. Did you have a good night’s sleep?” Dunn asked with concern.

Klein answered honestly, “Better than I expected. I didn’t even have nightmares. But I still feel heavy and a little disgusted when I recall it.”

“Very good. I feel assured hearing that,” Dunn said with a nodding smile.

After chatting about the weather, he raised a matter.

“The Holy Cathedral has replied to my telegram. Aiur, Lorotta, and company are to immediately escort Sealed Artifact 2-049 and the Antigonus family’s notebook back to Backlund. They’ve also sent an additional Nighthawk yesterday afternoon via steam locomotive to help.”

“I believe that they’ve already set off by now.”

Already set off by now? Does that mean I'm completely free from the traumatizing Antigonus family's notebook? Klein was taken aback. He found it surreal as though he was dreaming.

This is more relaxing than I imagined...

It's unlikely that there will be any follow up, right?

"May the Goddess bless them and that they will have a smooth journey." After a few seconds of silence, Klein made a gesture on his chest in the sign of the crimson moon.

Dunn wore his hat and pointed out the door.

"I have to patrol the Raphael Cemetery. Heh, I forgot one thing. The investigations of Leonard and the police department has borne fruit. They found the carriage driver that drove them. We have confirmed their temporary residence in Tingen City, but they are rather cautious. They didn't leave behind any valuable clues."

"As expected of an ancient secret organization," Klein echoed wistfully.

Dunn nodded and turned to head to the door.

He stopped three seconds later and turned his head.

"Also, the Holy Cathedral needs another two to three days before they notify us of your application to become an official member. Heh heh, this is dealt with by a different department, separate from the one that deals with the Antigonus family's notebook. They have different levels of efficiency." "I understand," Klein replied sincerely.

Meanwhile, he helped his captain add inwardly.

Remember to submit the compensation application today!

Watching Dunn leave, Klein heard the brown-haired Rozanne exclaim.

"Goddess! Klein, are you becoming a formal member? You haven't even joined us for a month!" Klein smiled.

"After I consumed the Seer potion, it was only a matter of time."

"That's reasonable..." Rozanne fell into a daze for a few seconds before suddenly sighing. "I was praying that you finished your mysticism lessons so that you could be added to the roster for watching the armory, but... Goddess, I have to be on duty every two days. I'm not a Sleepless! My skin, my state of mind.

Goddess, save me!"

"Shouldn't you be very familiar to such a lifestyle? Before I joined, it has always been you, Bredt, and Old Neil who took turns, right?" Klein asked, puzzled.

Rozanne shook her head with a depressed look.

"No, there were four previously, five even earlier. Unfortunately, Kenley chose to become a Sleepless. Viola did not choose to extend her contract last month and joined the Khoy Noel Machinery Company. She's a gifted girl when it comes to creation. She only lacked the opportunity and money. Five years as a civilian staff allowed her to have enough savings."

Having said this, Rozanne suddenly glanced at Klein and laughed with her mouth covered.

"I've thought of a good solution. Klein, get married as soon as possible. Then, accidentally expose the secret of Beyonders to her. This is considered a very minor leak so there won't be any particularly

heavy penalties. After all, who can lie to a person who shares the same bed with you over prolonged periods of time. You can introduce her to us when that happens make her a civilian staff member! What a perfect plan!" The corners of Klein's mouth twitched.

"Miss Rozanne, you can also quickly find a husband. It should be even easier. I believe you have the adequate means to divulge the secret to him."

Rozanne's eyes widened and her mouth turned agape when she heard him.

"How can I? Marriage is a very serious matter. I have to carefully pick and observe him over a period of time to ensure that he's alright."

That's not what you said a second ago... Klein didn't bother engaging in sophistry with Rozanne. He smiled as he engaged in a little small talk before bidding farewell and heading underground.

At the armory, he saw Old Neil wrestling with the handground coffee. So, he sat down and waited patiently.

"Soon you'll be an official member, right?" Old Neil asked casually as he filtered the coffee.

"Captain said that another two to three days are needed. It's still a question of whether the Holy Cathedral will approve of it," Klein said frankly.

"Hehe." Old Neil chortled. "The Holy Cathedral won't deny cases like these, especially when you're already a Beyonder."

With that said, he turned his head and faced Klein. He said with a chuckle, "You must be mentally prepared. There's a ritual every official Nighthawk member has to undergo. They have to complete a mission independently. Of course, Dunn would definitely choose the easiest and simplest ones for a rookie.

Besides, you're a support-type Seer."

"I have to complete a mission independently in order to become an official member?" Klein was taken aback. "But we might not even have a mission this week, and it might not be so simple."

Wouldn't this mean that it'll take me one to two months to become a official Nighthawk? Only then will I get a pay rise...

Old Neil sniffed at the coffee and shot a glance at him.

"It's only a ritual among Nighthawks. After all, we stand at the peak of Beyonder danger and don't want our teammates to act like children who require constant care. This won't affect the salary that you'll receive as an official member, or your privileges needed to fulfill your duty."

So it's just a ritual to gain the recognition of the other Nighthawks... But, Mr. Neil, why did you emphasize that it would not affect my pay grade as an official member... Did I make it that obvious? Klein touched his face and gave an embarrassed smile before asking, "Does it have to be a mission of the Beyonder variety?"

"That should be the case, but your performance yesterday was truly outstanding. You ingeniously killed a Beyonder that's at least at Sequence 8. I believe Frye, Royale, and the rest have already acknowledged you. Therefore, Dunn might just assign you to an ordinary mission," Old Neil said before suddenly sighing. "You'll have your salary increase several-fold. I'll never encounter something like that again in my lifetime."

Klein chuckled as he raised the matter about his Sequence pathway.

"Mr. Neil, do you think that the corresponding Sequence 8 of Seer is Clown?"

In fact, thinking back to the description from the confidential documents, it did seem to add up.

A job good at fighting with artifice...

"I can't give you any guarantees, but I think it's highly likely. Firstly, it matches up with what's said on the documents. Their agile movement and deception based battle style are key points. Next, other Sequence pathways have similar situations. Do you know the corresponding Sequence 8 for Mystery Pryer?" Old Neil asked with a chuckle.

"No, it's not written in the information provided by the Church." Klein shook his head honestly.

Old Neil chuckled briefly before saying, "I'm close friends with two old guys from the Machinery Hivemind. They mentioned it in passing, as a joke. The corresponding Sequence 8 potion of Mystery Pryer is Melee Scholar. Did you hear that? Melee Scholar. Goddess, I don't like melee combat at all. This doesn't suit the image of a Mystery Pryer at all!"

"I can understand... Mystery Pryer's pursue the mysteries behind things. Melee combat is one of those mysteries," Klein said after some thought.

Old Neil finished his handground coffee. "Alright, let's not waste time. Let's continue our mysticism studies. You still have a lot of ritualist magic that you need to grasp. You also need to learn how to create amulets and charms."

"Alright." Klein sat down and planned out his schedule for the day.

In the morning I'll study mysticism and read through all sorts of historical records. I'll submit the compensation request. After lunch, I'll practice at the Shooting Club. Then, I'll head to the Deweyville Library at Golden Indus Borough and see if I can borrow the corresponding monograph and journal regarding the Hornacis main peak. After doing all that, if I have time, I'll spend some time at the Divination Club. I can't slack off on my "acting."

Once the compensation request is approved and I receive the money, I'll be able to buy a new suit on the way home.

Yes... I'll apply for the materials tomorrow morning and try to make a protective amulet to ward off danger for Melissa and Benson.

...

In a dining hall adorned with a chandelier and elegant decorations.

A few friends were congratulating Joyce Meyer on his escape from danger and his return to Tingen.

"We all read the news. Just the written description alone was enough to scare me," a man with a short stubble on his chin said wistfully. "Joyce, I can't believe you went through such an ordeal. Cheers. The tragedy is over now, and the sunlight shines down upon us. Exalted is the Steam."

Joyce and his fiancée, Anna, raised their cups and clinked them together with their friends. Then, they gulped down what little champagne they had left.

"Anna was extremely worried at the time. I suspect that she cried every night. Whenever I invited her for some afternoon tea, she was always absent minded. Thankfully, you're finally back now. Otherwise, I reckon she would've passed away just like that," a young lady, with a cute small nose and coiled brown hair, said to Joyce as she glanced at Anna.

"If Anna were to experience something like that, I'd be the same. I might be in an even worse state." The aquiline-nosed Joyce gave his fiancée, who was sitting beside him, a gentle look.

Anna wasn't used to expressing her emotions in front of others. She looked at the opposite end of the table and said, "Bogda, why have you been keeping your head down this entire time? I can sense how terrible your mood is."

The young lady with a petite nose answered in Bogda's place.

"Bogda is sick. The physician told him that there's something seriously wrong with his liver. He can only use medicine to reduce the pain but it doesn't treat his illness. He needs to undergo surgery."

"Lord, when did this happen?" Anna and Joyce asked in surprise and concern.

Bogda was a young man with short hair, but his face was sallow.

His usually brilliant red eyes were replaced with a dim glow.

"It happened last week. Since Joyce wasn't back yet, I told Irene not to tell you," Bogda explained with a rueful smile.

Joyce asked staidly, "Have you decided when you'll undergo surgery?"

Bogda's expression changed a few times as he said, "No, I haven't decided yet. As you know, those surgeons are practically butchers. The patient is like a piece of meat on a chopping block, allowing them to butcher people as they please! I've read a lot of reports. They'll even use an ax for amputation! Lord, I suspect I might very well die on the operating table."

"But if you delay it further then surgery might not be able to save you," the man with a stubble said as he tried to persuade him.

At that moment, Anna interjected, "Bogda, perhaps you can consider doing a divination. If the divination indicates that everything will go smoothly, then proceed with the surgery as soon as possible. If the outcome of the divination is bad, seek other means. Seek it with the help of the fortune-teller. I know of a real, mysterious fortune-teller. No, I should address him as a Seer. I believe he can definitely help you."

"For real?" Bogda returned with a question, clearly looking doubtful. Their other friends shared the same attitude.

“Yes.” Anna nodded without hesitation. “I hired his divination services, and after divining Joyce’s situation, he told me to return home. ‘Your fiancé is at home waiting for you.’ Back then, I was like all of you, filled with doubt. But when I returned home,

I really saw Joyce. He was really back!”

“I can testify on this point,” Joyce echoed.

He didn’t mention that he had sought Klein’s help in interpreting his dreams. This was because the police had informed him that Tris hadn’t been caught yet. Therefore, he had to keep it a secret in order to prevent revenge from being exacted upon him.

“Lord, this is absolutely unbelievable!”

“Is divination really that magical?”

...

Amidst the shouting, Bogda thought deeply for a moment before saying, “Perhaps I should get a divination. Anna, Joyce, could you tell me the Seer’s name and address?”

Anna heaved a sigh of relief and said, “You made a very wise choice.”

“That Seer is at the Divination Club at Howes Street.

“His name is Klein Moretti.”

...

Golden Indus Borough. Deweyville Library.

Klein used the introduction note from his mentor’s letter to successfully apply for a borrowing pass.

As he flipped the tiny card in his hand, he asked a few librarians, “Do you have the Research of the Hornacis Main Peak’s Relics here? It was published by the Loen Publishing Firm.”

A librarian immediately answered, “Please wait a moment. Let me check the records.”

He turned around and looked at the drawers. He pulled open the letter that matched Hornacis and flipped through a card that was filled with single words that followed a particular order.

On careful inspection, he shook his head and said, “Sorry, Sir. We do not have this book in our collection.”

“How regretful,” Klein answered in clear disappointment.

From the looks of it, I need to write to the Loen Publishing Firm or pay a visit to the Khoy University...

Meanwhile, he sighed inwardly at how dated the management of the libraries of this world was.

You people need a computer. Unfortunately, I can’t produce one... Klein made a silent, self-deprecating comment and turned to ask, “Then, do you have the journal issues of New Archeology and Archeology Summary?”

“We do,” the librarian confirmed. “A gentleman just returned them.”

He flipped out the corresponding card and pointed Klein in the direction of the bookshelf.

Klein went over to the bookshelf, scanned the journal issues, and pulled out the ones his mentor mentioned.

Then, he randomly found a spot by the window to sit down. Under the bright afternoon sun, he began reading the information in the library quietly.

“...Ancient relics don’t solely exist on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range. They’re also spread out across the surrounding forests, valleys, and gentle slopes around the main peak...”

"...These relics are formed from lofty domes and gigantic stone columns. Honestly, they can be be described as magnificent..."

"...I'm curious as to how the original residents mine and process these rocks? Hypothetically, let's assume that they performed their mining operation on the spot without needing to send them up the mountain..."

"...There's a strange pattern where the relics become larger in size the closer you are to the mountain peak. But surprisingly, there are no ruins on the peak. According to our hypothesis, there should be palaces that don't resemble man-made

buildings, divine halls used for sacrifices..."

Palaces that don't look like they were man-made... divine halls used for sacrifices... Could it be the one that I saw in my dream? While Klein ruminated, he suddenly heard footsteps approaching him from a distance.

He looked up and saw a familiar face, a face that often appeared on the papers.

He had a squarish face, thick eyebrows, a firm nose, short darkblond hair, azure-blue eyes, and tightly-closed lips. All of these features belonged to a certain famous person from Tingen City, a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and the owner of this library—Sir Deweyville.

Beside Deweyville was the middle-aged butler who Klein had met before.

Klein watched them walk by from more than ten meters away. Out of curiosity, he raised his right hand and lightly tapped his glabella twice.

Various colors surfaced as auras and entered Klein's eyes. He casually studied Sir Deweyville's condition.

He's very healthy; there are almost no hidden problems... His emotional state is horrendous. Amid the dullness, there's frailty... His mental state is frail? He has trouble sleeping well? But the purple aura at his head is completely fine... Klein muttered silently to himself as Sir Deweyville walked off and left the library.

Retracting his gaze, Klein pinched his forehead and sighed inwardly.

Being a tycoon sure isn't easy...

He didn't pay much attention to the matter and returned his gaze onto the journal issues in front of him.

Klein didn't find a lot of clues after reading each of them. He could only confirm a few things.

Firstly, there existed an ancient kingdom on the Hornacis mountain range, as well as its surroundings. The ancient kingdom's history dated back to at least 1500 years. Secondly, their architectural style was primarily about being grand. They left behind all sorts of murals and from those murals, it could be deduced that they believed that the Evernight would protect the loved ones of the departed. Finally, in the ruins, there were symbols that represented the Evernight everywhere, but they were clearly different from the Evernight Sacred Emblem.

"If I had a chance, no— even if I have a chance, I'll never go there!" Klein muttered with clenched teeth. He vowed not to court death.

After tidying the journal articles and returning them back to their original spots, he put on his hat, lifted his cane, and left the Deweyville library.

...

Divination Club.

Bogda looked at the beautiful lady in charge of receiving guests and said, "I'd like to have a divination."

Angelica smiled politely and said, "Do you have a preferred fortune-teller? Or would you like to flip through our introduction guide and choose the one that's most suitable for you?"

Bogda pressed the right side of his abdomen and gasped silently for breath while saying, "I wish to have Mr. Klein Moretti divine for me."

"But Mr. Moretti is not here today," Angelica answered with uncertainty.

Bogda fell silent for a moment as he paced a few steps and asked, "When will Mr. Moretti be available?"

"No one knows. He has his own matters to deal with. From what I've seen, he usually comes here on Monday afternoons," Angelica said as she pondered over the matter.

"Alright." Bogda's face darkened as he turned around, planning to leave.

"Sir, you can choose other fortune-tellers as well. For example, you can choose Mr. Hanass Vincent who is famous in Tingen City," Angelica tried her best to prevent the loss of business.

Bogda stopped in his tracks and considered it for a moment before saying, "No, I only trust Mr. Moretti. Well, can I wait here for a moment? Perhaps he might come after he's done with his matters."

"No problem," Angelica said with a warm smile.

Bogda went to the sofa and sat down. Sometimes he stroked his cane; at other times he looked out the window, clearly looking rather impatient.

Seconds turned to minutes. Just as Bogda's mind was in a mess, unsure if he should continue waiting or leave, he heard the beautiful lady exclaim in pleasant surprise, "Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti!"

Klein saw the familiar Angelica and was just about to ask why it was always her. Did she not need to rest or take any days off?

However, he immediately took into consideration that he was a Seer, so it was not appropriate for him to ask such questions. Instead, he had to use the tone of a charlatan and say something like: "How marvelous it is for fate to compel us to meet once again, Madam Angelica."

Uh, would this sound like I'm hitting on her? Klein's mind whirled as he finally replied with a smile, "Good afternoon, Madam Angelica."

"A customer wishes to hire you for a divination." Angelica pointed to Bogda who had hurriedly stood up from the sofa.

Someone actually requested for me? Klein took off his half top hat in pleasant surprise, pinching his glabella twice while doing so.

"Good afternoon, Sir..." He looked over when his voice suddenly came to a pause.

In his Spirit Vision, he saw the requester's liver looking dim. It was nearly black in color. It was making the rest of his body unbalanced as his aura was thin in various places.

Klein deliberated over his words and he said in a serious expression, "Sir, you should see a doctor and not seek a divination."

Bogda stood stunned on the spot as he immediately gave a pleasant look of surprise while muttering, "How fascinating..."

"Anna wasn't lying to me..."

...

He hurriedly looked up at Klein in earnest.

"Mr. Moretti, I've already seen a doctor and might have to undergo surgery. However, I'm frightened about the surgery. I would like to divine the outcome."

The surgery of this era is really fraught with danger... Although Emperor Roselle had given the impetus, this era still lacks most of the necessary technology... Klein didn't reject his request and nodded slightly.

"My divination fee is eight pence. Is that fine?"

"Eight pence?" Bogda exclaimed in surprise. "You're only charging eight pence?"

According to Anna's description, and the performance Mr. Moretti had just shown me, I'm willing to pay at least a pound!

Haven't you heard of small margins with large volume? Klein was embarrassed for a moment. After thinking for a few seconds, he calmly smiled and replied, "It is enough just being blessed with the ability to receive revelations from the divine and catch a glimpse of fate. Therefore, we must maintain our humility and suppress our greed. Only by doing so, can we continue being bestowed with our gifts."

"You are a true seer." Bogda held his chest and bowed, his tone filled with sincerity.

Upon receiving Bogda's praise and trust, Klein's spirituality seemed to relax. As for the description of his "principles", it also gave him some new insight.

"Miss. Angelica, is Topaz available?" He turned to the beautiful lady beside him.

Angelica heaved a sigh of relief for Bogda as she smiled sweetly.

“Yes.”

After entering the divination room, Klein instructed Bogda to lock the door. Then, he sat behind the table and pinched his forehead.

“Shall we use tarot cards for the divination?” he inquired with a smile.

“Spirit Dowsing” was only suitable to determine matters related to him. As for drawing an astrolabe, it was too time consuming.

“I’ll leave it up to you.” Bogda had no objections.

Therefore, Klein helped him shuffle and cut the deck before laying them out in an Intis formation.

Thanks to his uniqueness as a Seer, Klein did not flip the other cards. Instead, he directly flipped the card that indicated the final result.

“A reversed Wheel of Fortune. Things will develop badly.” he said solemnly as he shot a glance.

The color in Bogda’s face drained instantly and his lips trembled.

“Is it hopeless?”

As Klein tried his best to think of a solution, he said, “Let me try a different divination method. Please leave your ring behind. Next, write your date of birth on this piece of paper. Then, please wait outside quietly.”

Influenced by his gentle and comforting tone, Bogda calmed down and followed the instructions by writing down the information and leaving his ring behind.

As he watched Bogda leave, Klein wrote a sentence on the piece of paper.

“Outcome of Bogda Jones’s surgery.”

He picked up the ring and paper slip and leaned back into his seat before using a dream divination technique.

In a blurry and distorted world, he gradually found himself, only to see the gentleman collapse with an ashen expression. He was covered in white cloth as he was pushed out of the quaking operating room.

This time, Klein didn’t encounter anything strange. He no longer felt the sense of being watched, so he quickly woke up. He knitted his brows tightly as he considered how he was going to inform Bogda about the outcome.

The surgery may very well lead to death... I can try the restorative ritualistic magic I learned today... but that would expose the matter of Beyonders. Besides, I have to apply for Captain’s approval first... Yeah, and I might not be able to treat such a severe disease... Klein was racking his brains when he suddenly thought of something.

“Mr. Glacis’s lung disease was treated by an apothecary. He said that the medicine was extremely miraculous... What was it? Right, Lawson Darkwade, 18 Vlad Street in East Borough. Lawson’s Folk Herb Store!” As he tried his best to memorize the address back then, Klein quickly remembered the details.

He rapped the corners of the table and quickly made a decision.

After using Spirit Dowsing to quickly determine if it was a good or bad idea, Klein walked out the door. When he saw Bogda stand up in a fluster, he returned his ring to him and said warmly with a smile, “I found hope for you.” “Really?” Bogda asked pleasantly surprised.

Klein did not reply him as he continued talking.

“Your hope lies in the East Borough, on Vlad Street. It’s related to the single term Lawson.”

“If you can’t find it, come back here again on Monday at four in the afternoon.”

“Good. Good.” Bogda nodded as he repeated himself. He excitedly fished out his wallet and produced five pence and three pennies.

He had done according to what Klein had said, without using tips to corrupt a true seer.

The corners of Klein’s lips twitched as he received the money, but he smiled brilliantly.

“I hope you will find hope as soon as possible.”

After Bogda left, he handed over the commission like the previous time and also gave Angelica tips, pretending as though he had collected a soli.

...

East Borough. Vlad Street.

Bogda walked from one end of the street to the other, repeating it three times until his liver started to ache.

Finally, he determined that there was only one place that had anything to do with Lawson on the street. It was the Lawson’s Folk Herb Store, numbered 18 on the street.

Mustering his courage, he walked in and caught the smell of the various herbs. He saw that the owner of the shop had black but very short hair. His face was round and he looked to be in his thirties or forties.

The boss’s formal attire resembled that of a village witchdoctor. It was a deep black robe embroidered with all kinds of strange symbols.

“Hello, do you have medicine that can treat my disease?” Bogda asked politely.

The boss raised his head and swept his deep blue eyes across Bogda and smiled.

“Your liver disease is very serious, but the premise of everything is whether you have the money. Do you have enough to pay for the medicine?”

He can tell? Bogda suddenly felt a lot more confident as he nodded frantically.

“How much is your medicine?”

“Ten pounds. It’s a very fair price.” The boss fished out a bag of herbs from under the counter and said, “Add sufficient water and boil it into medicine. After boiling it, add ten drops of fresh rooster blood, then drink it down immediately. This bag of herbs can be cooked thrice. You will be fine after three times.”

As he spoke, he opened the yellowish-brown paper and threw in all sorts of strange herbs.

It sounds extremely shady... Bogda gulped down his saliva and said, “That’s it?”

The boss stared at him and immediately smiled.

“Do you still want something else? What about this bag? Once you recover from your liver disease, I can give you a guarantee that your wife will be very satisfied.”

He chuckled as he took out a black-papered bag of herbs and suppressed his voice.

“There’s mummy powder inside... Trust me, a lot of aristocrats consume this stuff. They put it in their tea or boil it as soup.”

... Bogda’s confidence in the boss wavered to the point of feeling disgusted.

I believe in Mr. Moretti... He took a deep breath, fished out his wallet, and pulled out the two biggest notes from what little was left of his gold pounds.

Holding onto the yellowish-brown paper bag full of herbs, Bogda staggered out of the Lawson's Folk Herb Store.

While waiting for a tracked carriage, he suddenly came to a realization.

He had spent ten pounds to buy a bag of stuff?

This was nearly a month's salary for him!

If it wasn't for his trust in Anna and Joyce, he wouldn't have brought that much cash to the Divination Club!

Could it be that the reason why Mr. Moretti only accepted eight pence for his divination, had something to do with his collusion with the boss of Lawson's Folk Herb Store, so as to earn more? This was a classic scam written on the papers! When Bogda made this connection, he even began to suspect Klein a little. He even began suspecting Joyce and Anna.

When a tracked carriage stopped in front of him, he looked at the herbs in his hand. Unable to bring himself to return, he entered the carriage with a heavy heart.

...

Inside Lawson's Folk Herb Store.

As the boss watched Bogda leave, he suddenly turned his head and shouted at the door where there was a pile of herbs, "Scharmaine, stop purchasing herbs from today."

"W-why, Master?" A handsome-looking youth with disheveled hair walked out.

The boss smiled and said, "This is the sixteenth customer that has come because of my fame. If this carries on, I believe the Nighthawks, the Machinery Hivemind, and the Mandated Punishers will notice me. When the time comes, I'll need to consider heading to other cities."

"Then, do we need to sublease this store?" Scharmaine nodded in understanding as he asked with concern.

The boss chuckled.

"If you wish to stay, you can be the boss of this store. You are already capable at identifying herbs and concocting medicine. Of course, remember to deposit half of your monthly profits into my anonymous Backlund Bank account."

"But, I haven't learned what you are really good at." Scharmaine was already sick of never staying in a city for more than a year, but he was unwilling to give up learning the magical formulas that his master was good at.

The boss leisurely rocked himself in his seat.

"That's not something you can learn just because you want to..." ...

A blackish-green bubbling liquid appeared in front of Bogda's eyes. It smelled of stinking socks and the color that makes one want to puke made him deeply suspicious about everything he had done today.

When the rooster blood was dropped into the medicine, Bogda's father looked at his son worriedly and said, "I think surgery is the best option."

The few drops of rooster blood bubbled with the boiling liquid before vanishing. Bogda took a deep breath and said, "If this medicine is useless, I'll consider surgery."

"The Lord will watch over you." Bogda's father gestured a triangular Sacred Emblem across his chest.

By the time the boiling liquid had cooled down, Bogda had no intention of wasting the ten pounds. He raised his right hand and closed his eyes. Flicking his head back, he gulped down the medicine in one go.

The pungent aroma that had the noxious smell of blood, swished around in his mouth as he nearly spat out everything he had just drank.

That night, Bogda had an upset stomach. He went to the bathroom six times, and by the time the crimson moon vanished, he fell asleep groggily.

After an unknown period of time had passed, he jolted awake, having dreamed that he was being reprimanded by his boss at work.

“Thankfully, I took three days of annual leave. I don’t have to rush to work.” Bogda heaved a sigh of relief when he discovered that he felt a lot more spirited.

This was in stark contrast to the sluggish state he was in for the past few weeks.

Bogda subconsciously reached out and pressed the right side of his abdomen. He noticed that the region which previously hurt when under slight pressure felt normal. He only felt the pain from ordinary pressure.

“Don’t tell me it was really effective? That apothecary was clearly just fooling me...” Bogda was both surprised and doubtful as he got out of bed. He stretched himself and felt his health returning to him.

He fell silent for a very long while as he muttered, “According to the apothecary, I still need to drink it twice. Once I’m done drinking, I’ll go to the hospital to get a check up from a doctor...

“That apothecary didn’t tell me how many times I can drink a day...

“...I still think he’s a cheat...”

...

Inside the civilian staff office of the Blackthorn Security Company, from his prior request, Klein received a space where no one would disturb him.

He held a carving knife and emitted his spirituality. He seriously carved the incantations and symbols onto two silver accessories.

The incantation was a request to avoid misfortune and was written in Hermes. The two mysticism symbols symbolized the Evernight Goddess as well as the Empress of Misfortune and Horror.

Aside from that, Klein also added the Path Number that corresponded to the Goddess, 7, and the magical characteristic.

In addition to that, charms and amulets had to be engraved on both sides; and each side’s symbols, incantations, and characteristics, their exact locations, or special formats was in the realm of mysticism. The ones that were spread amongst the ordinary populace were filled with mistakes.

At that moment, Klein had a lot of damaged materials to his right. Through repeated practise, and only after he confirmed that he had enough practice, did he dare to begin creating the amulets for Benson and Melissa.

As he calmed his mind, his spirituality spewed out from the tip of the carving knife. The number 7 appeared on the surface of the silver accessories.

He had already finished carving the incantations and symbols on the other side of the accessory. All that was left was to finish the remaining side.

After putting down his knife, all his spirituality chained together as Klein suddenly felt a strange, majestic, and terrifying energy surge throughout the room.

The commotion quickly vanished as the incantations on both sides of the accessory became complete with Klein's Spirit Vision. It emitted a serene blackness.

He put down his carving knife and gently polished the silver accessory that was formed from a circle and a vertical piece. He felt a tinge of coolness from the mild-to-the-touch surface.

"It's done!" He happily placed the finished amulet and another one that he had previously finished into his pocket, planning to find an opportunity to give it to Benson and Melissa.

Amulets created by Beyonders possessed a certain level of effectiveness. They allowed the wearer to unknowingly avoid disasters to a certain extent, but it was nothing too ridiculous. Furthermore, their spirituality would wane bit by bit. Unless one used a high-level ritualistic magic and created a prayer set, a year was the maximum one could use them for. As for high-level ritualistic magic, there was a terrifyingly high spirituality requirement. It wasn't something Klein could endure at the moment.

When the time comes, I can use my spirituality to make another one... Klein thought, nodding as he began tidying up the messy table.

He didn't make one for himself for the moment, because an amulet of that level had limited effects on him. Therefore, his goal was to gain a deeper understanding of incantations before trying to pair it with ritualistic magic. That way he could create a few defensive amulets that could be activated specifically with sound.

After everything was finished, Klein walked out the office and prepared to hand over the damaged materials. That was when he saw Captain Dunn walk over in his black trench coat.

Dunn's deep and gray eyes swept across him as he smiled.

"Klein, the Holy Cathedral has approved it. You're now an official member."

"Really? That's great!" Klein expressed his delight.

Dunn nodded and said with a smile, "You can now receive a make-up pay of three pounds for this week. You'll receive 4.50 pounds every subsequent week until the advance payment is cleared.

"By the way, did I mention the Nighthawks' ritual?

"Every official Nighthawk has to independently complete a mission. Only by doing so will you gain the recognition of your partners. In consideration of the outstanding performance you showed, I believe I can assign you an ordinary mission instead. When that happens, I'll formally introduce you to all the Nighthawks in Tingen City."

Klein replied without hesitation, "Alright!"

Three pounds plus his compensation of seven pounds. Getting a new suit wasn't a problem anymore!

Furthermore, he would still have plenty left over!

Well, who knows when my mission will arrive...

Klein waited all the way till Sunday, the day of Selena's birthday banquet.

...

Changing into his formal suit and using a brush and handkerchief to tidy his half top hat, Klein looked himself in the mirror before walking over to the first floor in satisfaction.

At that moment, Melissa was sizing up Benson's clothes.

"Is there a problem?" Benson raised his cane, feeling a little lacking due to his sister's gaze.

He felt that there was nothing wrong with him when he inspected himself. He was already dressed quite decently.

Melissa stopped staring at him and said with a serious expression, “Benson, that is a very old suit you’re wearing.”

“There will be a lot of excellent ladies and madams participating in today’s birthday banquet. I believe that by wearing that, it’ll be a form of disrespect to them.”

Klein was originally filled with questions. However, when he heard Melissa’s emphasis, he immediately realized what was happening. He went over with a chuckle and said, “Benson and I share a similar build. He can wear my other tuxedo.”

He had already informed his siblings about buying a new suit. He explained it away by saying that his clothes had been torn while inspecting certain objects. Therefore, the company generously compensated him. Of course, he concealed the matter of him being “promoted with a pay rise.” He was afraid of scaring them and only planned to tell them after half a year.

Such an explanation made Benson and Melissa extremely envious. They felt that the Blackthorn Security Company was an impeccable employer.

“There’s no need to, right?” Benson retorted, having not realized the gravity of the situation.

“No, it’s extremely important.” Klein pushed Benson’s shoulders up the stairs. “My tuxedo is hanging on the clothes rack.”

After watching Benson go up the stairs in a daze, Klein turned around and smiled at Melissa.

“Are you hoping that Benson will use the opportunity provided by Selena’s birthday banquet to begin a beautiful new romance?”

He had been reading quite a fair amount of newspapers and magazines recently. He knew that aristocrats and middle-class banquets were typically grounds for blind dates.

Melissa nodded solemnly.

“Yes, Benson has missed out too much because of us.”

Sis, why are you like a mother... Klein looked at Melissa as he suddenly shook his head with an exasperated laugh.

Seeing the unconvinced look his sister's face, Klein suddenly felt like it was a good opportunity. He sized her up and said with a solemn expression, "Melissa, I think you aren't showing enough respect to today's banquet as well." "What?" Melissa wore a puzzled look.

Klein pointed at her neck.

"As a lady, you are lacking a necklace that accentuates that area."

Without waiting for his sister to say another word, he smiled as he fished out a silver amulet wrapped with angel wings from his pocket.

"Thankfully, I prepared one for you."

"..." Melissa was taken aback at first before she asked, "How much was it?"

Sis, your concerns are really quite misplaced... Klein silently scoffed as he explained with a chuckle, "It's actually not very expensive. Since it was in an incomplete state, I imitated an item that I've seen before and engraved blessing incantations and beautiful patterns on them."

"You engraved them?" Melissa was indeed distracted.

"How is it? What do you think of my work?" Klein took the opportunity to hand over the amulet to his sister.

Melissa studied it before gently biting down on her lip.

"I like the surrounding angel feathers."

If you think the incantations and symbols I engraved are ugly then just say so. There's no need to mince your words... An amulet's value is in its effects! The corner of Klein's mouth twitched. Just as he was about to urge his sister to accept it, he saw Melissa put on the necklace with a forced expression on her face. She then carefully adjusted the positioning of the amulet.

"Perfect." Klein sized her up and gave her exaggerated praise.

Melissa shot him a glance and looked down at her amulet. She said listlessly, "Klein, you were never like that before. Acting like that..."

"Perhaps it's because of my good job. With a decent income, I've become more confident." Klein interrupted his sister and gave a preemptive explanation.

Sigh, even though I received the original Klein's memory fragments, making myself appear natural in most major aspects, certain fine details are still there. I'm still used to presenting my real personality... Especially when I'm getting closer and more familiar with Benson and Melissa... He sighed inwardly.

Melissa seemed to accept his explanation and pouted her lips. "It's great that you're like that... really great..."

After the two engaged in a short conversation, Benson came down having changed his clothes. He wore a white shirt with a black vested tuxedo. His black bowtie and a pair of long, straight trousers made it seem like he had undergone a complete makeover. It was like he was a successful businessman after years of hard work.

Same for the receding hairline... Klein chuckled inwardly.

"Excellent, Benson. It suits you very well," he said with a brilliant smile while throwing up his hands.

Melissa also nodded in agreement on the sideline.

"The facts show that my clothing is more important than me." Benson gave a self-derisive comment.

Klein took the opportunity to fish out the remaining amulet and repeated his explanation from earlier before saying, “I also made one for you.”

“Not bad. I’ll bring it with me.” Benson accepted it without a fuss as he quipped, “Klein, I wouldn’t find it odd, even if you were to suddenly know how to style your hair, make clothes, fix watches, and feed curly-haired baboons.”

“Life is just so full of surprises,” Klein replied with a smile.

Following that, the siblings tidied themselves up before walking out the main door. They took a trackless public carriage and arrived at the North Borough’s Fania Street where Selena’s house was.

The Wood family lived in a terrace house as well, but unlike Klein’s place, they had a porch. They had a small lawn in the front which made it look very elegant.

When they rung the doorbell, Klein, Benson, and Melissa only had to wait for around ten seconds before they were able to see the star of the day, Selena Wood.

With a head covered in wine-red hair, the girl gave Melissa a delighted hug.

“I like this dress of yours. It makes you look exceptionally beautiful.”

Standing beside Selena Wood was her father, Mr. Wood, senior employee of Backlund Bank’s Tingen branch.

“Welcome, our honorable elder brother. Welcome, our young historian.” He deliberately addressed Benson and Klein in an exaggerated manner.

Young historian... Why doesn’t he add the description of me having a conscience?... Klein retorted as he took off his hat and replied with a smile, “Mr. Wood, you look much more spirited and younger than I imagined.”

His style of flattery had unknowingly inclined himself to the Foodaholic Empire.

Benson held out his hand and shook Wood’s hand.

“I know a lot of bank employees, but they’re all equally arrogant and stiff, as though they’re the latest machines. None of them are as civilized as you.”

“If you were to meet me at the bank, you might not say that about me.” Wood laughed cheerfully.

After exchanging pleasantries, Selena, who was wearing a new dress, led the siblings inside with a hop in her step. At times, she would mention in her usual tone that, “Elizabeth is already here,” and at other times, she would suppress her voice saying, “Melissa, your brothers are more handsome than I imagined.”

Hey, I have good hearing... Although you are flattering me... Klein helplessly looked at the two sixteen-year-old girls walking ahead of him.

This isn’t right. I’m still quite far from being considered handsome... Tsk, Miss Selena, how ugly did you imagine Benson and I to be? A balding, gloomy, fat man with a pale expression and lifeless eyes? Klein pinched his glabella in passing as he diligently practiced his Spirit Vision.

Miss Selena Wood is healthy. She’s excited and very happy... Mr. Wood’s lungs are a little problematic. Right, I see his pipe... Klein swept his gaze across the crowd while in a good mood.

“Elizabeth, Melissa is here.” At that moment, Selena introduced with a brisk tone.

A girl dressed in a blue frilly dress walked over. She had naturally curled brown hair and adorable baby fat.

Klein was stunned when he saw her because he knew the girl.

He had helped her choose an amulet back at the underground market!

Elizabeth greeted Melissa first before looking at Benson and Klein.

She was stunned and her brows knitted slightly, as though she was thinking about something.

Soon, Elizabeth smiled and politely greeted them as though nothing had happened.

Klein also pretended not to recognize her. Under Wood's lead, they came to the sofa in the living room where they were introduced to Chris—Selena Wood's brother—and the other guests.

As Klein watched Benson chat with Chris and the other solicitors happily over the topic of their neighbor, Mr. Shaud, he couldn't help but feel envious.

I don't have such socializing skills... He picked up a cocktail from a table in the corner of the room as he listened quietly. At times, he would nod and echo with a smile.

It didn't take long before all the guests arrived and the banquet officially began.

As too many guests had been invited, the Wood family's dining table could not accommodate everyone. Therefore, the banquet was done in a buffet manner. The lady's maid served the steak dishes, roast chicken, fried fish, mashed potatoes, etc and placed them on different tables. The valet was responsible for carving the meat, allowing for guests to take what they wanted.

Klein couldn't help but click his tongue when he saw the elegant enamel plates and silver cutlery. He felt that the Woods were being too extravagant as a middle-class family.

Since they're so rich, why would Chris need so many years to prepare for his wedding?" When he thought of what his sister had previously mentioned, he was puzzled. *"Yeah, it was probably to save up money to buy this cutlery that would have taken them so many years to afford. To such families, they have to look respectable!*

Amidst his mixed emotions, Klein picked up a plate and walked in front of a dining table. He forked a piece of honey-glazed roasted meat.

At that moment, Elizabeth with her adorable baby fat cheeks came over. As she looked at the food, she whispered, "So you are Melissa's brother... Thank you. Selena likes the amulet I gave her a lot. She said that she felt healthier the moment she wore it."

Selena... Amulet... Klein suddenly recalled the reason for selecting an amulet for the girl beside him.

It was to give to a friend who liked mysticism as a birthday gift!

That friend was Selena? Selena liked items related to mysticism?

Klein frowned slightly as he smiled politely.

"It might just be akin to a placebo effect."

After saying that, he began waiting for her to praise Emperor Roselle.

However, Elizabeth's reaction was that of confusion.

"What's a placebo effect?"

"It means it's completely psychological. At times, we believe that we will turn for the better and end up really becoming better," Klein explained crudely.

"No, she said it's different from the amulets that she bought in the past. It feels different," Elizabeth emphasized.

She cocked her head and shot a glance at Klein and said curiously, "I never expected Melissa's brother to be an expert at mysticism."

"As you know, I studied history, so it's common to encounter similar matters." Klein diverted the topic skillfully as he asked, "Are you also studying at the Tingen Technical School?"

“No, Selena and I were Melissa’s former schoolmates. Later, she went to a technical school. I study at the nearby Ivos Public School,” Elizabeth explained seriously.

A public school wasn’t established and maintained by the government. Instead, it was a school that accepted students from the public. It was an evolution of good grammar schools whose goal was to groom graduates so as to enter university. The schools were rather expensive and they would consider the students’ family background. It could even be out the of range of typical middle-class families.

She didn’t talk much. After choosing her food, she returned to Selena’s side.

After congratulating the star of the day on a happy birthday, the banquet gradually came to an end. Klein and Benson were invited to a game of Texas hold’em. The small blind was half a penny, and the big blind was a penny. As for Melissa, Elizabeth, Selena, and their friends, they went upstairs. It was unknown if they were chatting or playing games.

Klein’s luck was pretty bad. He played about twenty rounds, but didn’t receive a good hand at all. All he could do was fold and be a spectator.

When he flipped the ends of his cards again, he found a Two of Hearts and a Five of Spades.

“Shall I try a bluff once?” Klein considered for a moment, but did not manage to muster the courage. He also resisted the urge to use divination to cheat.

He covered his cards and rapped the table, indicating that he was not making a call. Then, he got up and left the table to head for the bathroom.

Roselle was also a person with a obsessive-compulsive disorder. He actually found an odd reason to name the play style Texas... Klein shook his head as he proceeded forward.

At that moment, he suddenly came to a halt as his pupils constricted.

His spiritual perception told him that there was a strange fluctuation upstairs!

The strange, twisted, and obscure fluctuation was short-lived. Shortly afterwards, Klein even suspected that he was hallucinating.

If he wasn't considered rather skilled at spiritual perception, it was very likely that he would've written off the abnormality.

Klein frowned as he thought of his sister upstairs. He tightly held onto his cane as he went around the bathroom and hobbled to the Wood household's staircase.

He quickly went upstairs while following the traces with his spiritual perception before arriving at the living room beside the balcony.

This should be it... Klein mumbled as he raised his hand and tapped twice on his glabella.

Auras penetrated the walls and the large wooden door before entering his vision. Most of the colors were ordinary with a blurry outline.

However, one of them in particular was rippling with a sinister dark green color over its surface that slowly corroded inwards.

Just as I thought, something wasn't right. Klein wore a usually stern expression as he reached out with his right hand and removed the silver chain which was wrapped around his left wrist.

He held the silver chain in his left hand, allowing the topaz to dangle before him.

When the topaz stopped swinging, he traced the spherical light and chanted inwardly, "The room before me has danger caused by the supernatural."

Normally, spirit dowsing was only suitable for divining something that was related to him or the specific circumstances in a small region around him. As such, Klein described the chant in very specific manner—the 'danger' could affect him and the room was right in front of him.

...

"The room before me has danger caused by the supernatural."

After repeating the chant seven times, Klein eyes widened as he saw the topaz rotating in a clockwise motion rapidly.

It was an indication that there was indeed danger caused by the supernatural inside the room, and it was of considerable danger!

Selena is a mysticism enthusiast. Did something go extremely wrong when she was dabbling with some sort of ritual? What should I do? Klein massaged his brows and wrapped the chain around his wrist before knocking on the door.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

He knocked on the door three times rhythmically and wore an amiable smile on his face.

The door opened with a creak. Melissa, who was wearing her new dress, appeared in front of Klein.

"Klein, is something wrong?" The girl didn't expect her brother to be here, so she was momentarily surprised.

Klein responded with a smile, without any sign of distress.

"I was just curious since I heard you gals enjoying yourselves."

"Sorry for disturbing all of you." Melissa lowered her head in apology, feeling somewhat embarrassed. "We're playing with magic mirror divination. Selena knows a lot and it's very fun."

Magic mirror divination... Sis, why don't you gals play Charlie Charlie challenge [1] or Ouija boards [2]? Klein shook his head, feeling both peeved and amused.

He looked behind Melissa and into the living room. He saw Selena with her beaming smile and deep dimples.

However, in his Spirit Vision, the wine-red haired girl, who was holding a silver-coated mirror, was being encroached by the sinister dark green colors.

As his mind whirled, Klein deliberated over his words and said, "Heh heh, I won't be interrupting your game. Ah, right. Where's Elizabeth? I had chatted with her over Feysac grammar. She mentioned that she wanted to ask me some questions."

"Elizabeth?" Melissa sized her brother up and said in an

eccentric tone to emphasize her words. "She's only 16."

Hey, don't let your imagination go wild! Klein immediately explained, "It's a very normal academic discussion. Elizabeth is very interested in history and ancient languages."

Melissa took a deep look at her brother before saying, "She's inside. I'll inform her."

"Alright." Klein took a step back and moved away from the door.

While watching his sister turn around, he heaved a sigh of relief. Although it wasn't the best of reactions, he was thankful that the person in a danger wasn't Melissa.

He only waited for about ten seconds before a puzzled Elizabeth walked out. She asked curiously, "Mr. Moretti, what's the matter? I never said I was interested in history and ancient languages..."

At that moment, her sentence was halted by Klein's stern and solemn expression. Her nerves tightened as she seemed to sense that something wasn't right.

Klein took a few steps diagonally as a gesture for Elizabeth to hide partially behind the door.

The girl with the chubby baby fat was influenced by the sudden serious atmosphere so she unknowingly followed.

"As you know, I'm a mysticism enthusiast." Klein halted and turned around, speaking directly to the point.

Elizabeth nodded and replied, "Yes, I even believe that you're an expert at mysticism."

"No, I'm only an enthusiast, but this doesn't stop me from noticing that your magic mirror divination has turned into a problem," Klein said with a heavy tone.

"A problem?" Elizabeth nearly raised her voice as she hurriedly raised her hands to cover her mouth.

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "I know words alone will make it difficult for you to believe me. Return to the room and when Selena isn't paying attention, steal a glance at the front of the mirror which Selena has hidden away from all of you."

"How do you know that she hid the front of the mirror from us?" Elizabeth blurted out.

According to the information from the Nighthawks, more than ninety percent of the time, magic mirror divination cases which involve evil share such similarities... Klein smiled and said, "General knowledge."

When the doubtful and frightened Elizabeth returned to the room, his composed smile vanished instantly. His face looked worried.

Even though we're all in the North Borough, to go from Fania Street to Zouteland Street will take at least 15 minutes of travel by public carriage. By the time Captain arrives after making a round trip, the situation might have deteriorated to a hopeless state... If only Benson and Melissa wasn't here... But I can't deal with those hidden and unknown existences... Do I have any means to contain it... Right,

Selena is a mysticism enthusiast. Her room definitely has no lack of extracts, essential oils, herbs, and other items...

Just as Klein was racking his brains for a solution, Elizabeth sat next to Selena by using an excuse of discussing something with her.

A girl opposite her sipped a mouthful of red wine, and under the teasing looks of everyone, despite her blushing, she mustered her courage to ask, “Can you help me divine when I’ll meet a romantic and handsome gentleman?”

Selena lightly coughed twice as she rubbed the mirror’s back and said, “Mirror, mirror, tell me. When will the gentleman in Yonina’s heart appear?”

After repeating it three times, she picked up the mirror and raised it in front of her.

Seizing this opportunity, Elizabeth suddenly turned her body and stretched out her head to take a glance.

According to her expectations, she felt that she would see Selena’s face and half her face.

However, the only thing she saw was Selena.

The tiny mirror only had Selena, and it was Selena’s entire body!

The mirror was completely pitch-black, with Selena standing in the middle with a cold expression!

Elizabeth trembled all over as she lunged backward and leaned against the sofa. She momentarily forgot to breathe.

She involuntarily trembled and without giving an excuse, got up immediately, stumbling to the door. She didn’t even dare to turn back to look at the beaming Selena.

“Yonina’s gentleman will appear on the Sunday of the second week, half a year later...”

Amidst giggles, Elizabeth opened the door and left the room to see Klein who was standing in the shadows of the wall lamps in his tuxedo and half top hat.

“Mr. Moretti, I-I...” she stammered in a daze.

Klein calmly smiled.

“Don’t disturb the girls and ladies inside.”

Infected by his smile, Elizabeth calmed down significantly. She extended her hand and closed the door as she quickly walked over to the wall lamp.

“I saw it. I saw only Selena inside the mirror. A devil-like Selena...” she whispered hoarsely.

Indeed... Klein’s expression turned serious as he asked in a deep voice.

“Do you know which is Selena’s bedroom? Do you know where her mysticism items are?”

“There. The mysticism items are in there as well.” Elizabeth didn’t hesitate to point at a room diagonally across.

Klein held his cane and walked over, opening the unlocked wooden door. Under the streetlights and the crimson moon’s illumination, he turned a valve and lit a gas lamp.

A pale yellow light glowed as he swept the area and found bottles of extracts, flower essence, boxes of herbal powder, candles and amulets.

These items were placed on tables or neatly arranged inside a rack. Their names were given on sticker labels.

After confirming the items, Klein said to Elizabeth who had followed behind him, “Do you want to save Selena?”

"Yes!" Elizabeth subconsciously nodded before asking in a daze, "Will it be dangerous?"

"A certain amount. After all, I'm only a mysticism enthusiast," Klein replied frankly.

"A certain amount of danger..." Elizabeth pursed her lips tightly for a few seconds before saying, "Is there anything you need from me?"

Klein smiled warmly as he comforted her, "Don't be nervous. Now, all you have to do is pretend to return as though nothing had happened. Return to Selena's side. Five minutes later— remember—five minutes later, tell Selena that you have a pleasant surprise and bring her to me. Knock on the door softly, one long knock and two short ones. Following that, well—leave it to me."

Elizabeth thought over it silently before nodding seriously.

"Alright."

Seeing her return to the living room, Klein glanced at his pocket watch. He closed Selena's bedroom and quickly cleared the desk. Then, he picked the items needed and placed them on a chair.

Immediately following that, he picked up two faint candles with a light aroma. He placed them on the upper left and right corners of the desk.

They were symbols representing the Lady of Crimson and the Empress of Misfortune and Horror.

Klein planned on holding a ritual here to borrow the Evernight Goddess's powers to ward off the mysterious and unknown existence that was affecting Selena!

As he was only a Sequence 9, the ritualistic magic he knew wasn't strong enough. In order to succeed, he needed Elizabeth to lure Selena into a sealing circle, right in the vicinity of the altar!

Therefore, he needed to consider situations in which Selena might notice and resist!

Due to these reasons, Klein planned on using suspension-style ritualistic magic.

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1. A paper-and-pencil game played using held orbalanced pencils to produce answers to questions they ask.
2. A board with letters, numbers, and other signs aroundits edge, to which a planchette, movable pointer, or upturned glass moves, supposedly in answer to questions from people at a seance.

Suspension-style ritualistic magic referred to the termination of a ritual according to the Beyonder's judgment. They could finish other matters first before returning to continue the ritual. Even by doing so, it was still possible to gain the desired effects.

This was a technique produced over 1000 years of ritualistic magic development. After all, many high-level ritualistic magic required multiple steps. The duration ranged from an hour to half a day before finishing. It was difficult to ensure that no one disturbed them during the entire process or that there wouldn't be any accidents.

After gaining lessons from various predecessors through blood and tears, gaining feedback through each failure, being able to suspend ritualistic magic became mainstream at the higher levels while it also indirectly affected the lower level rituals.

However, being able to suspend a ritual didn't mean that the ritual could be suspended at any time. One had to abide by mysticism theory and grasp the corresponding technique. If not, the failure of the ritual was unavoidable. it could even result in a terrifying backlash effect.

Based on Klein's understanding, once one gained the attention of a particular divinity, and the divinity was waiting on the contents of the request, to suddenly say, "Wait, I need to use the bathroom," one can only be congratulated since they might never need to go to the bathroom ever again.

Phew... Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he composed himself.

Even though he had held many luck-enhancement rituals and had even designed a corresponding ritual that made an attempt at Justice and The Hanged Man, this was his first actual ritualistic magic that abided by the rules.

After looking at the silver-inlaid cane by the side of the bed, Klein picked up the third candle and placed it in the middle of the desk to represent himself.

He placed the silver bowl that Selena used for rituals in front of the third candle and replaced the ax with a Sacred Emblem. On the left were extracts and essential oils of the Moon flower, Slumber flower, and other plants. While on the right, he placed a plate of salt, a small silver dagger, a piece of fake goatskin, and a quill that was dipped in ink.

Luckily, Selena had a complete inventory; otherwise, he wouldn't have had any way to complete the preparations. As for the moderately fast rituals that Old Neil could perform, they were not something a Seer could do...

From the looks of it, Selena is quite an experienced mysticism enthusiast. Yes, if she wasn't experienced then she wouldn't have gotten into such trouble... She was only 16 and had been exposed to all of this for at least a year... Who had guided her? Ideas flashed through his mind as he picked up Selena's cup from the bed. He poured plain water into it and placed it beside the coarse salt.

He took out his pocket watch and popped it open. He didn't delay any further after taking a glance at it. He traced layers of the spherical light in his mind and quickly entered Cogitation.

The room that was filled with floral fragrance, was suddenly subject to a formless whirlwind. Klein put away his pocket watch and his eyes suddenly turned darker, from brown to black, as though he could see through one's soul.

He extended his palm and laid it against the candle on the top right corner. He chanted inwardly, "Evernight Goddess, you are the Lady of Crimson!"

As Klein chanted, he extended his spirituality and rubbed the candle wick. After a couple of moments, the candle suddenly lit up, and there was a tranquil blue inside the dim yellow light.

"Evernight Goddess, you are the Empress of Misfortune and Horror!"

Just like he did before, Klein successfully lit up the second candle on the top left corner.

“I am your loyal guard; the shield that fends against danger in the dark night, and the long spear that stabs at evil in the silence!”

Whoosh!

The third candle that symbolized Klein began to burn.

The flame was still. He picked up the small silver knife and mimicked Old Neil’s motions. He used incantations, coarse salt, and plain water to fulfill the purification.

Then, he let his spirituality that he had gathered spewed out from the tip of the silver dagger, and naturally merged them as one.

With the silver knife in hand, Klein walked around the bedroom —kneeling when he came to the bed— and sealed the area with a formless barrier.

The light from the street lamp outside the window suddenly disappeared, but the red light was still shining through quietly.

Klein returned to the study desk and picked up the quill. With spirituality and ink, he drew incantations and symbols to ward off misfortune.

When all of that was finished, he put down the things he was holding. Then, he trickled a drop of extract, flower essence, and essential oils on each of the three candles.

Sizzle!

A faint fog filled the room which suddenly possessed an additional hint of mystery.

Next, he burned a few types of herbs before taking a step back from the mixture of fragrances and began reciting the corresponding incantation in the suspension ritualistic magic.

“Standing higher than the cosmos and more eternal than eternity, the Evernight Goddess.

“I pray for your loving grace.

“I pray for you to show your loving grace to a devout believer of yours.

“I pray for the power of the Crimson.

“I pray for the powers of Misfortune and Horror.

“I pray that you will cleanse your devout believer, Selena Wood, from evil’s corruption and be safe from danger.

“I pray that you would wait for a moment, a moment for that unfortunate girl.”

...

“Moon flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

“Slumber flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!”

...

After reciting the incantation, Klein closed his eyes and repeated it seven times in his heart.

He saw that there was nothing out of the ordinary at the altar. He then lifted the silver dagger again and took a few steps back to the door of Selena’s bedroom.

He tapped his chest in four spots, forming the shape of the crimson moon. He then turned around and raised his silver dagger.

His spirituality spewed out from the tip once again and sliced open the shape of a door in the formless wall.

Klein knew that even if he opened the door at that very moment, it wouldn't affect the tranquility and holiness of the altar.

He took out his silver vine-leaf pocket watch that had an intricate pattern. He checked the time and went through the process that was to happen in a few moments.

...

In the living room on the second floor.

Elizabeth's body was quivering as she lifted her head from time to time to check the wall clock. She was counting down in silence under the illumination of the two gas lamps.

"It's almost time..." As she spoke softly, she looked sideways at the lively girl with long wine-red hair. Her dimples were deep, her smile was bright, and she gossiped well with all the friends around her.

But the more everything looked normal, the more terrified Elizabeth felt. The cold and terrifying Selena in the mirror seemed to be in her head, and she couldn't wipe the image away.

I can't wait anymore! I have to take action now! Elizabeth suddenly stood up. Before everyone's shocked gazes, she smiled and stuttered, "Selena, I-I have a surprise for y-you. Follow me out for a bit."

"Really? Didn't you give me a birthday present already?" Selena flipped the mirror the other way around and stood up in surprise.

"A surprise will n-not have any signs." Elizabeth felt that she had no talent in acting at all.

Without saying another word, she walked toward the bedroom door first. Selena followed behind with a confused smile.

Melissa looked at her two best friends leaving, and unconsciously knitted her eyebrows.

Elizabeth is acting so strange today...

She started acting even stranger after she met Klein...

She suddenly ran out earlier and said that she needed to use the bathroom, but why did she look so anxious?

...

Selena's bedroom entrance.

Elizabeth took a deep breath and said to the girl in front of her, "Let's go to your room."

"Elizabeth, you seem very nervous and afraid. Why?" Selena looked puzzled at her good friend as she noticed her body trembling constantly.

"Excitement! Yes, excitement!" Elizabeth shot a glance at the mirror in Selena's hand as she turned half her body around to knock on the door with a long knock followed by two short successive ones.

"Why are you knocking on the door..." Selena was baffled even more.

Creak. Her bedroom door opened. Dressed in his black tuxedo and half top hat, Klein appeared in front of the two girls.

"Pleasant surprise? This is a pleasant surprise?" Selena's mouth turned agape as she felt perplexed.

At that moment, Klein suddenly reached out his hand and grabbed her by the wrist. He pulled her into the room as Elizabeth stood rooted to the ground.

Simultaneously, Klein's silver dagger struck forward as it spewed out his spirituality which quickly mended the door-shaped passage.

The invisible spirituality wall sealed off the room, insulating Selena's screams within.

Bang!

Klein suddenly closed the door and without even looking at Selena, he rushed to the desk.

The wine-red haired girl stopped screaming as she looked up and surveyed the room.

Her gaze rapidly turned cold as her skin was mottled with paleness. Her fingers rapidly grew sharp fingernails.

And at this moment, Klein had already returned to his Cogitation state. He trickled a drop of Moon flower and essential oil onto each candle as he chanted loudly, "Supreme Lady of Crimson, Great Empress of Misfortune and Horror.

"I pray for you to bestow your loving grace.

"Show your loving grace to the lost lamb, Selena Wood!"

While chanting, he picked up the fake goatskin and pushed it onto the candle representing the requester.

Whoosh!

He felt a cold wind blow behind him as an immense energy assaulted his body.

The goat skin was ignited and Klein threw it into a silver bowl. Then, he crouched downwards in accordance to his preparations to dodge the lethal strike.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The wind howled ferociously, and Klein felt the uncontrolled outpouring of his spirituality surging like the currents.

He saw the goatskin burning in the tiny silver bowl, burning in silent darkness, and he heard heavy items landing on the ground behind him.

Bam! Bang!

The two sounds followed one after another with almost no breaks in between. Wisps of dark green gases plunged into the silver bowl and vanished into the illusory darkness.

Klein rolled to the side and got up. He drew his revolver from his underarm holster. However, he saw that the adorable red-haired girl Selena had fallen to the ground and the silver-coated mirror had shattered into countless broken pieces on the carpet.

Those shattered pieces didn't reflect Selena, but showed the ceiling and Klein's silhouette.

Then, through the Spirit Vision he had left active, Klein saw the wicked dark green in Selena's aura had vanished completely. Everything returned to normal, but she seemed more frail.

Phew... He had just relaxed when he felt a sharp, throbbing pain in his glabella and head.

The sharp pain spread all over his body and made him want to roll around on the floor.

Klein held his fists tight, and the veins on the back of his hands popped and became black. They looked like moving worms.

Simultaneously, he heard silent screams and the whispers that ripped at his mind.

It took him nearly twenty seconds to survive the ordeal. His forehead and vest was soaked in cold sweat.

The ritualistic magic I used sucked up all my spirituality and almost made my Beyonder powers lose control? Klein made a rough guess of the situation.

That also made him notice that he had digested quite a bit of the remaining energy in the potion. Based on his calculations, if he had the strength at the time he consumed the potion, he believed that there was no way he could have survived the ordeal. He could have become a monster straightaway.

“Acting” is quite effective after all... Klein tapped his glabella and wiped away his sweat.

He turned towards the altar, tapped his chest four times, and said out loudly, “Praise the Lady!”

Following that, he extinguished the candles and quickly tidied up the altar.

Finally, he placed the items back into the desk and used his silver dagger to dispel the spirituality wall seal.

Whoosh!

The sound of the wind echoed before subsiding. Klein let out a long sigh of relief and felt a sense of lingering fear.

“If I hadn’t walked through the process beforehand and successfully completed the ritual then things would have become troublesome... Besides, I still don’t know who my opponent or enemy is... Thankfully—yes—thankfully, the room was carpeted, so I didn’t damage my clothes while rolling...”

He shook his head and reached out to open the wooden door to Selena’s bedroom.

“How was it?” Elizabeth took two steps back and asked nervously.

Klein looked at her terrified expression and took off his half top hat before saying with a warm smile, “I’ve already corrected the mistake of her magic mirror divination. It’s been resolved now.”

"Has it really been resolved?" Elizabeth asked in disbelief.

Klein smiled and nodded casually.

"Yes."

"It wasn't too hard."

That last part was a lie... He added inwardly.

Perhaps it was the fact that Klein had been calm and collected all this time, or perhaps he was her only ray of hope. Either way, Elizabeth didn't doubt him any more. She patted her chest and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank you. You truly are a trustworthy gentleman. I was scared senseless just now.

"How is Selena? Is she fine now?"

"She might remain unconscious for the next few minutes, but she's completely fine now. Oh, two to three days of weakness is to be expected." Klein suddenly had a stern expression on his face as he asked, "Who taught her mysticism? Didn't he tell her about the basic taboos?"

Elizabeth straightened up a little more like a student who had just been scolded by her teacher.

She thought for a moment before saying, "Selena once mentioned that her teacher is Hanass Vincent. She met him a year ago at the Divination Club on Howes Street."

Hanass Vincent... On the surface, he didn't seem to teach anything questionable about magic mirror divination, but he secretly been teaching dark divination... If I knew about this earlier, then I would have reported it to Captain and have raided him earlier... Klein felt some regret as he asked in a deep voice, "Was he also the one who taught Selena magic mirror divination?"

Klein was left with a lingering sense of fear because this matter had nearly affected his sister—Melissa!

Elizabeth nodded cautiously.

"Yes, but Selena had tried magic mirror divination a few times without any success. Oh, today she told me that she had a peek at her teacher's hidden incantations and that there would be no problems."

She was basically an expert at courting death... Klein massaged his temples to alleviate his headache.

"Do you still remember the incantations she recited?"

Well... Although Hanass Vincent had not voluntarily imparted the dangerous knowledge to Selena, it's obvious that he had been experimenting with it to extend an invitation to a mysterious, unknown entity. This would become a problem sooner or later. It has to be dealt with quickly before it gets worse and becomes a problem for someone else...

"I remember a part of it..." Elizabeth recalled. "She recited it in Hermes. As you know, I was only exposed to Hermes just recently. All I remember is her using the terms 'revolve,' 'spirit,' 'Creator,' and 'grace.'"

Creator? The True Creator? Many underground mysticism enthusiasts believe in this ancient entity revered by many secret organizations... Yes, an entity that appeared 1000 years ago during the early stages of the Fifth Epoch! Klein nodded amidst his thought and said, "Remember to ask Selena about the entire incantation after she wakes up, then find an opportunity to tell me."

"Alright," Elizabeth replied without any reservations.

But she immediately asked, feeling a little confused, "Mr. Moretti, why don't you ask her yourself?"

"I don't want to let Melissa know I enjoy mysticism. Can you help me keep that a secret?" Klein asked in return.

Elizabeth bit her lips, her eyes sparkling.

“No problem. Melissa prefers machines to mystery. She likes logic over instinct.”

Klein placed his hat in front of his chest and bowed gentlemanly.

“Thank you for your understanding. As for Selena, you do know that she’s not someone who can keep a secret.”

“A more accurate description is that she likes to share secrets with others,” Elizabeth agreed.

Klein put on his hat and thought for a moment before saying, “Remember to tell Selena after she wakes up that she suddenly fainted and shattered her mirror. I think her memory probably stopped at the point when she began the magic mirror

divination.”

Seeing Elizabeth nod, he put on a stern expression once again and said, “Remember, be it divinations or trying other mysticism rituals, do not pray to any other entities other than the seven orthodox divinities! You should immediately burn those types of incantations and stay far away from anyone distributing those materials!

“If I hadn’t noticed this in time, Selena would have turned into a monster or an evil spirit in ten minutes, and everyone here would have been killed, myself included!”

Thinking about the ice-cold Selena in the mirror, Elizabeth had no doubts about what Klein had just said. She sighed with lingering fear and said, “I understand and I’ll remember. I’ll also keep an eye on Selena.”

“Alright, go and take care of Selena.” Klein raised his black cane and walked toward the stairway.

As he walked, his eyes became darker. He took out a single penny with his right hand and flicked it into the air.

“Selena is alright now. “Selena is alright now.”

...

Klein quickly repeated the description, then caught the falling coin. He saw George III’s face facing upward.

This was not a simplification of spirit dowsing. Instead, it was a simplification of dream divination. At that moment, Klein had forced himself into a state of sleep with the aid of Cogitation in order to take a tour through the spirit world. The heads and tails of the coin were a symbolic manifestation.

Heads represented affirmation, while tails indicated dissent!

Great, everything is fine now... Klein twirled the bronze coin with his fingers happily.

That was a simplification only a Seer could accomplish.

...

Elizabeth was staring at Klein’s back and saw the flying coin before he caught it.

Only when Klein vanished down the staircase did she turn to enter the bedroom. She saw Selena asleep on the floor with shattered pieces of the mirror beside her.

She held her breath and tiptoed into the room as she looked at the fragments of the mirror. She made sure that the ice-cold Selena was no longer present; instead, the fragments were reflecting the ceiling.

Phew. Put completely at ease, Melissa heaved a long sigh of relief.

But despite her efforts, she couldn’t move Selena to the bed. Instead, she nudged her awake.

“Elizabeth... What happened to me? Did I get drunk?” Selena asked weakly, the glow in her eyes having turned considerably dull while her eyes were filled with confusion.

Elizabeth thought for a moment and replied in a serious tone, “No, Selena, something happened to you. Your magic mirror divination invited a malicious entity.”

“Is that so?” Selena weakly made her way to the bed with Elizabeth’s help. She rubbed her temple as she said, “All I remember is when I started the magic mirror divination.”

Elizabeth told a half-truth, “You were a completely different person during the ritual. The you in the mirror was completely different from the you in real life... I was very scared. Using the excuse of giving you a surprise, I brought you into the bedroom before I snatched your mirror and shattered it onto the carpet. After that... after that, you fainted.”

“Blessed be the Goddess, you’re okay now!”

“I-I don’t remember anything...” Selena muttered, her face pale.

The more Selena tried to remember, the emptier her mind became, and the more afraid she felt.

Subconsciously, she glanced at her desk and noticed that the placement of items was clearly different.

Just what happened exactly... Selena tried hard to remember, but she could only faintly remember a man in a black suit and hat. He was not strong or tall, but he had a straight back.

“Selena,” Elizabeth said seriously, “I met a mysticism expert when I went to the underground market to purchase the amulet. He said that we shouldn’t pray to any entity other than the seven orthodox divinities. Otherwise, we would be sure to invite disaster. Promise me, don’t try this anymore. I didn’t even know if what I did could save you just now!”

Selena was scared senseless. She nodded in a daze.

“No more, I’ll never try this again!”

“And, just what did the incantations of your mysticism mean? If I have the chance to meet the mysticism expert again, I will ask him for you,” Elizabeth asked, feigning nonchalance.

Selena rubbed her temple and said, “Spirit that revolves this world, the grace of the True Creator, the eyes that look at fate.”

...

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Klein smoothed the creases and patted the dust off his clothes as he walked down the stairs.

After that, he took off his hat and returned slowly to the long dining table.

“Where did you go? It has been nearly 10 minutes,” Selena’s brother, Chris, asked as he folded his hand.

Klein smiled and replied, “To the bathroom, then upstairs to acquaint myself with the ladies.”

“I appreciate your honesty,” Chris praised in laughter.

He had the red hair and short build that ran in their family. He wore gold-framed glasses and had quite the personality; he was an exceptional lawyer.

You wouldn’t say that if you knew that I had knocked your sister unconscious upstairs... Klein replied humbly, “We were merely engaging in academic discussion.” *In the area of mysticism...*

He put down his hat and returned to his seat. He received his two cards as the new round started.

Flipping up the corner of his cards, he saw the King of Spades and the Ace of Diamonds.

Looks like I became luckier... Is this payback for doing a good deed? Klein took out a coin in preparation to place his bet.

Since Hanass didn't intentionally reveal the incantation to Selena, there's no need for me to urgently report this to Captain...

He continued his cautious playstyle in the following rounds, only betting when he had a good hand. He didn't take any chances to bluff and didn't win much. When the game ended at half past ten, he had won six pence.

"I won two soli and eight pence." Benson fiddled with the notes and coins in his hand.

"I didn't expect you to be an expert at poker," Klein praised, laughing.

"No, I don't play often, but I know that this is the same as negotiation. You have to hide your cards and figure out the hidden cards that people have before using various means to scare or entice them..." Benson hadn't finished his sentence when he saw Melissa and the rest coming down from the second floor.

"It's time to go home," said Klein as he glanced at his sister and her friends while rubbing his temples.

The throbbing pain in his head remained.

After that, Klein went to the bathroom once more and took the opportunity to walk past Elizabeth and obtained the complete incantation.

Returning to his siblings, he smiled and said, "Oh right, I suddenly remembered something. I need to head back to the company for a while. Shall we go to Zouteland Street first? It'll be quick."

"What is it?" Benson asked casually.

Melissa looked at her brother with a serious expression because she felt that Klein's behavior tonight was strange as well. In fact, it only looked slightly more normal than Elizabeth's behavior and, later, Selena's.

Klein chuckled as he had long thought of an excuse and said, "There was a mistake in one of the document descriptions, and I already informed my colleagues that I would hand it over to them when I arrive early at the company tomorrow morning. So, I can either amend it now since it's on the way or wake up at least half an hour earlier tomorrow morning. No doubt, I've chosen to do the former."

"Ah, no wonder. I had a nagging feeling that your mind wasn't in the game, so you were actually thinking about work." Benson smiled, suddenly enlightened. "No, I apologize. I should say, the card game helped you think."

"Alright, we shall wait for you." Melissa looked away and smoothed out the ruffles of her engageantes.

As it was past the operation time for both track and trackless public carriages, the three siblings bid their hosts farewell before hiring a carriage nearby. It cost two soli for forty-five minutes.

"I've heard that every carriage driver that rents out their own carriage adds ridiculous fees," Benson complained in a low voice. He had used most of the money that he won earlier to pay the driver.

Klein smiled and replied, "I think it's very acceptable. After all, it is almost eleven o'clock."

"I was just joking. I thought that we could actually share the carriage with other guests. Forty-five minutes can take us to many places." Benson looked out of the window at the other people who were hiring carriages one after another.

I know, ride-sharing... Klein rubbed the top of his silver-inlaid walking stick and said, "We don't have a problem with that, but the other customers might. Benson, did you notice that they care a lot about their image and at looking respectable? I think that might be common among the middle-class."

"Hmm." Benson nodded seriously and said, "The Wood family was much more extravagant than I imagined. However, Wood's weekly salary is only four pounds per week... Heh, 'looking respectable' might be the biggest difference between the middleclass people and curly-haired baboons."

Do you have something against curly-haired baboons... Klein almost burst out laughing.

Melissa didn't join in on their discussion. She took a seat and sized up Klein from time to time. Her gaze was sending chills down his spine.

The two-wheeled horse carriage was traveling quickly in the dark, quiet street. They arrived at Zouteland Street in only twelve minutes.

"Wait for me here. Five minutes, it won't be more than five minutes," Klein emphasized. He put on his top hat, grabbed his cane, and got off the carriage.

As the carriage driver was charging based on time instead of distance, the driver didn't mind waiting.

Going up the stairs, Klein arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company and knocked on the door.

Within ten seconds, the door was opened wide. Leonard Mitchell appeared before him in a vest and shirt.

"You're not on duty tonight," Leonard pointed out, looking surprised to see him.

Klein was only on guard duty once a week for the Chanis Gate. They maintained a regular work schedule for the rest of the time. As for emergencies that happened at night, they would be dealt with by the Sleepless who enjoyed the night.

However, only getting two to three hours of sleep a day can cause baldness and memory loss... Whenever he thought about this, Klein couldn't help but ridicule Captain Dunn Smith in his mind.

"I have something to report," he answered simply.

"There's a mission?" Leonard asked casually, moving aside.

When Klein entered the reception hall, he saw Dunn coming out in his black trench coat. His gray eyes were dark as usual. "Captain, I came across an incident involving the supernatural."

"Give me the details," Dunn asked directly.

Klein recounted the whole story from earlier and reported the steps that he took to deal with it.

"...So, I think there's a need to investigate Hanass Vincent."

Back then he believed that since the evil entity that was invited by the magic mirror divination hadn't caused a disaster, and there was no indication that he was in extreme danger. That meant that the entity probably still needed more time. It didn't want to awaken or possess Selena ahead of time; therefore, as long as its goals were not exposed, the evil entity chose to observe the situation. Under such circumstances, it wasn't hard for Elizabeth to trick Selena to head to the entrance of the bedroom.

"You've done well. You seized the opportunity before the evil spirit fully materialized to possess her body completely." Dunn lifted his head lightly and said, "Let us take care of the follow-up investigations. You can return home to rest." Klein heaved a sigh of relief and chortled.

"I thought you would make this my initiation mission and make me complete it alone."

From the incantation that Elizabeth provided him, Hanass Vincent was certainly dangerous...

"That's because there's already an initiation mission for you." The desultory Leonard chuckled by the side.

"What?" Klein was shocked.

Dunn smirked and explained with his soothing voice, "At around seven tonight, the police station referred us to a case. From our initial assessments, there doesn't seem to be any danger or urgency, so it was decided that you would complete it on your own tomorrow."

"Alright, don't ask about the case. Rest well tonight and move your day off to Tuesday or Wednesday."

Captain, doing that only affects my sleep... Plus, Monday afternoon is when the Tarot Gathering takes place... Do I need to send a postponement notification to Justice and The Hanged Man? Klein shook his head and smiled bitterly. He then bade farewell and left.

Exiting the stairway, he suddenly sensed something. He lifted his head to look towards the carriage that they had hired. He only saw Melissa looking at him silently through the window.

When they made eye contact, Melissa suddenly looked away and sat properly.

The corner of Klein's mouth twitched, and he got into the carriage, pretending nothing had happened.

Under the crimson moon and pure night sky, the carriage moved quickly down one street after the other.

When they returned home, Klein yielded the bathroom to Benson for his shower while he went to Melissa's bedroom and knocked twice.

Melissa, who was planning to use the other bathroom, opened the door and looked at her brother suspiciously.

“Melissa, do you have any questions that you’d like to ask? I know you do,” Klein asked straightforwardly.

Don’t just observe me in silence...

Melissa lips trembled and creased her eyebrows as she spoke.

“Klein, what did you do to Elizabeth? She seemed a bit off.”

“And, later on, Selena started acting very strange too.” Klein had prepared his reply.

“Do you know that Elizabeth and Selena are mysticism enthusiasts?”

“...Yeah, but I don’t like it. I don’t think there’s anything that can’t be explained in this world,” Melissa answered seriously after being momentarily taken aback. “Anything that seems unexplainable is due to the fact that the knowledge we have grasped is insufficient.”

“Yeah, I think so too,” Klein echoed her sentiments guiltily.

I once thought so too, until I successfully courted death...

He coughed lightly and continued, “Mysticism involves Hermes, the language used specifically for ancient worship ceremonies and prayers. Elizabeth knew that I am good at it. Heh, it is within a historian’s domain after all. So, she asked me about the pronunciation of corresponding words and their actual meanings.”

Melissa nodded lightly, signifying her acceptance of her brother’s explanation. It went according to her understanding of both parties.

“As for why Elizabeth and Selena became weird later on, I have no idea about the actual reasons.”

Klein removed himself from the picture first, then he said, “But, I can make a guess.” “You managed to guess it?” Melissa blurted out in shock.

Klein lifted his hand and patted his lips.

“I could guess from the contents of what Elizabeth asked. The few Hermes words were related to divination, as well as the worshiping of evil entities. Yes, when Selena did the magic mirror divination, did she recite in Hermes?”

He proactively brought that up in order to remind his sister to keep her guard up against similar situations. It would be even better if she could cut off contact with Selena and Elizabeth.

“Yes...” Melissa replied after a delay. “I think I understand why Elizabeth and Selena were acting strange...”

Then, Klein asked deliberately, “As Selena’s magic mirror divination involved a wicked, illegal belief, perhaps Elizabeth found an opportunity to criticize and correct Selena’s mistake after she clarified with me the actual meaning of the Hermes that Selena had used?”

“I think so,” Melissa didn’t doubt this conclusion because she had made the same deduction herself.

Klein let out a breath of relief upon seeing that he had successfully directed the flow of the conversation.

“In the future, it’s best if you advised Selena to put her beliefs in the orthodox.”

Then, he tapped four spots on his chest just like a priest.

“Yes, I will!” Melissa replied, sounding determined.

“And, don’t tell Elizabeth and Selena about our deduction or about the things that I’ve said. I actually promised Elizabeth not to tell you,” Klein emphasized.

“Okay.” Melissa nodded lightly.

...

On Monday morning at eight, in the Blackthorn Security Company.

Klein took off his hat and greeted Rozanne and Bredt. After exchanging a few words, he entered Captain Dunn Smith’s office.

He pushed the door open and looked around. He suddenly had a shock, because Dunn’s face was pretty pale and his gray eyes looked clouded, without their usual darkness.

“What happened? Hanass Vincent?” Klein asked in concern and shock.

Dunn rubbed his forehead, took a sip of coffee, and replied with a bitter smile, “Hanass Vincent is dead.”

“Who killed him ahead of time?” Klein sat before Dunn with his cane in hand.

Dunn didn’t answer immediately but sighed and said, “Leonard and I went to look for Hanass Vincent last night. As his usual behavior didn’t show any unusual signs and there was nothing odd about his house, I decided to enter his dreams to look for clues.”

“In his dream, in his dream...”

His eyes showed fear as Dunn repeated himself twice, that was when he said, “In his dream, I saw a cross, a huge cross, one that blotted out the sky. On the huge cross there was a naked man nailed to it with black nails. His arms and legs were pinned with his arms extended outwards. He was hung upside down, his head hung low like a chandelier. There was strips of blood stains on his body.”

“Upon seeing such a scene, I lost consciousness. I left Hanass Vincent’s dream, and when I woke up, Leonard told me that Hanass had died in his sleep.”

“Huge cross, hung upside down, the man covered in blood stains... It’s similar to some of the stories of the True Creator that some of the hidden organizations believe in, but there are considerable differences too...” Klein made a deduction in suspicion.

The few hidden organizations that believed in the True Creator had only appeared in the last two or three centuries, such as the Aurora Order and the Iron and Blood Cross Order. However, similar such depictions had never disappeared over the past thousand plus years.

Dunn rubbed his forehead again. “We’ll follow-up on this. As for you, go ahead and complete your initiation mission first.”

Klein nodded and said, “Alright, but I still don’t know what my mission is.”

“Nothing dangerous. I haven’t seen any signs of danger at the very least,” Dunn emphasized. “This is a case which was referred to us by Golden Indus’s police department. The famous philanthropist Sir Deweyville has been experiencing unusual harassment over the past month. Be it his bodyguards, the security guards he has employed, or the police, none of them have been able to find the culprit. Inspector Tolle, who is in charge of this case, suspects that it involves Beyonder powers and, thus, handed the case over to us.”

I saw Sir Deweyville at the library the other day and noticed that he was feeling down and lethargic. So it was a result of being harassed... Klein knitted his brows and asked, “What kind of harassment is it?”

There hasn’t been any physical harm inflicted yet; thus, the harassment wouldn’t be considered dangerous.

“Sir Deweyville hears moans and cries every night, no matter where he is, be it Tingen or not. This has affected his sleep quality negatively.” Dunn flipped the notes in his hands. “He has seen a psychiatrist and has asked his butlers and servants to confirm that it was not an illusion. Having confirmed that it isn’t a hallucination, thus, it is suspected that someone is harassing him.”

Closing the file, Dunn looked up at Klein.

“Change into your probationary inspector uniform in the break room, then meet Inspector Tolle who is in charge of this case at the Shooting Club. He’ll provide you with more details.” “Probationary inspector uniform?” Klein asked instinctively.

Dunn rubbed his forehead and smiled.

“Half of our salary comes from the police department, and the title of probationary inspector doesn’t merely belong in the records. When you met Leonard and I for the first time, we were also wearing uniforms. This is a perk held by fully official members. Yes, the ‘Perks’ as Emperor Roselle would call it.”

Unfortunately, I can’t wear it as a casual outfit. Otherwise, I’d be able to have another spare outfit when my clothes are being washed... Klein picked up his cane and bade farewell before leaving the captain’s office.

He headed toward the break room and saw a black and white checkered uniform, complete with leather boots, placed on the table. The uniform’s peak cap was embroidered with the logo of the police department—two crossed swords and a crown. Located on the shoulder was a black and white epaulet with a shimmering silver star.

“This is a probationary inspector uniform?” Klein glanced at the uniform and noticed a string of numbers under the silver stars: 06-254.

He had some understanding of the police rank structure in the Loen Kingdom. He knew that those at the top were the minister and the chief secretary of the police force. Under them were the respective commissioners, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners of the various police departments. Those in the middle were superintendents and inspectors, while those at the very bottom were the sergeants and constables.

After closing the door, Klein took off his suit and hat before changing into the uniform.

He hung his suit up and left the room. He made his way into the clerk’s office and looked at himself using the full-body mirror that Rozanne brought to him.

The young man in the mirror had black hair with gentle brown eyes. The uniform on his body accentuated him with a heroic spirit.

"Not bad." Klein praised himself narcissistically. He left his cane in the office and left the Blackthorn Security Company.

Inside his pockets were a full set of equipment, ranging from weapons to his police badge.

...

At the hall of the Shooting Club.

Klein met Inspector Tolle immediately since he was the only one in a police uniform.

Of course, there's me too... Klein thought.

There were two silver stars on the epaulets of Inspector Tolle's uniform. His clothes were propped up by his stomach and he had a thick blond mustache. His frame was tall but not imposing. Perhaps, it was imposing in the past.

"Moretti? Klein Moretti?" Inspector Tolle noticed Klein and welcomed him with a smile.

"Hello, Inspector Tolle, I believe that you have the right person," Klein replied amicably, then following his memories, he raised his right arm, kept his fingers straight and tight before saluting.

Tolle chuckled.

"I can tell that you'll be a young man who's easy to get along with. That's good. Shall we head to Sir Deweyville's place now?"

Even though he was a higher rank than Klein, the tone in his query was obviously friendly.

"No problem." Klein thought for a moment before he said, "You can fill me in on the details of the case on the carriage."

"Sure." Tolle stroked his thick blond beard and guided Klein out of the Shooting Club. They boarded a carriage which was stopped on the other side of the road.

There was the "two crossed swords and a crown" police emblem on the carriage, and it came with a personal carriage driver.

"Sir Deweyville is a believer of the Goddess, so we referred the case to you," Tolle said quickly as he sat down.

"I know. The fine knight is a common figure on the covers of newspapers and magazines." Klein flashed a friendly smile.

Tolle picked up the document docket beside him and removed the seal before taking out the materials inside. As he flipped through them, he explained, "Regardless, even if you are aware of it, I need to provide you with the detailed briefing.

"Sir Deweyville is one of the richest tycoons of Tingen City. He built his career beginning with a lead and porcelain factory. It has now expanded to steel, coal, shipping, banking, and bonds. He is also a great philanthropist that has been praised by the king, having set up the Deweyville Charity Foundation, the Deweyville Trust, and the Deweyville Library... He was also knighted five years ago... If he were willing to run for mayor, I don't think anyone in Tingen City could contest with him.

"But Backlund is his goal; he wants to become a member of parliament. We once suspected that the harassment might be related to this, but we have no clues to this date."

Klein nodded slightly and said, "We can't rule out that possibility, but there's nothing to confirm that suspicion as of now."

Tolle didn't dwell on this point. He continued, "From the sixth of last month, Sir Deweyville has heard painful skin-numbing moans every night when he sleeps, akin to a patient's fight for his life. He has

checked the surrounding rooms multiple times, but he hasn't found anything unusual. His butler and servants have also confirmed that they heard such sounds, but it is simply softer for them.

"In the beginning, Sir Deweyville believed that this matter would pass quickly and didn't pay too much attention to it. But the moans became more and more frequent, to the point of occasionally happening during the day. There was even the addition of heart-wrenching cries."

"This has made Sir Deweyville lose sleep, time and time again he had no choice but to leave Tingen to his villa in the villages. But it was to no avail. The moans and cries persisted. Similarly, the phenomenon persisted even in Backlund, just that it wasn't as serious.

"He employed security guards to check his surroundings, but they didn't find any clues. Our preliminary investigations also came up with nothing.

"Sir Deweyville, who has been tortured for more than a month, is on the brink of collapse. He visited psychiatrists time and time again but was unable to have his problems resolved. He told us that if this problem was not solved within a month, he would leave Tingen and head to Backlund. He believes that there would be people who can help him there."

After listening to Tolle's explanation, Klein quickly analyzed and came up with a few possibilities.

He offended a Beyonder and is suffering from a curse?

No, if he was suffering from a curse, the butlers and servants in his house wouldn't hear the same things...

There's a Beyonder with unknown motives hidden among his servants and bodyguards?

But the problem stems from the point that there has been no requests made of Sir Deweyville over the past month...

Perhaps Sir Deweyville accidentally came into contact with some vengeful evil spirit?

That possibility cannot be ruled out...

The carriage entered the Golden Indus borough while Klein was still deep in thought. It stopped at the door of Sir Deweyville's house.

A steel fence surrounded a lush garden. There were two statues by the side of the hollowed metal gates, a magnificent fountain that showered a marble sculpture with water, an expansive twostory building, as well as a path wide enough to fit three carriages.

"Even the knight's house is only two stories high... The newspaper reported that Backlund is experimenting with building ten-story apartments..." Klein got off the carriage and saw a sergeant with three chevron stripes walking over briskly.

He looked at Klein and saluted.

"Good morning, Sir!"

"Good morning." Klein nodded with a smile.

Tolle smiled.

"This is Sergeant Gate, you can tell him if you need anything.

"This is Probationary inspector Moretti, a history and psychological expert from the police department," Tolle introduced Klein to Gate.

...I don't deserve such a title... Klein felt a little embarrassed.

After the greetings, Gate pointed to the two-story building behind the fountain and said, "Sir Deweyville is waiting for us." "Alright." Klein caressed the revolver at his waist.

That was his best bet against an enemy.

Since he was in police uniform, he could put his revolver in a holster at his hip, making it easier to draw it.

As they spoke, the trio made their way down the path, around the fountain, and arrived outside the door.

By then, the door was already opened by a servant who was waiting politely at the side.

As Klein pretended to adjust his hat, he tapped twice on his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision before entering the house.

The square-faced Sir Deweyville was massaging his forehead in the hall. He was clearly in low spirits. His blond hair and blue eyes were either dry or dull as though he had aged considerably by at least five years.

"Good morning, Sir Deweyville." Klein, Tolle, and Gate bowed at the same time.

Sir Deweyville stood up and forced out a smile.

"Good morning, Officers. I hope that you can resolve what has been causing me distress."

At that moment, Klein squinted and slightly knitted his brows.

Other than his low spirits, Klein couldn't find any other problems with Sir Deweyville.

That's odd... He thought for a moment before he said, "Sir, in which room did you first hear the moans?" "My bedroom." Sir Deweyville shook his head.

"Can we take a look?" inquired Klein.

"Haven't you checked it many times?" the middle-aged butler interrupted from the side.

It was clear that he didn't notice that Klein was the partner of the kind-hearted soul that had "not pocketed the money that he picked up."

Klein smiled, composed.

"Those were my colleagues, not me."

"Sir, this is an expert sent by the police agency," Tolle said, taking the opportunity to introduce him.

Deweyville looked at the young expert and said, "Alright, Cullen, take him to my room."

"Sir, I hope that you will come with us," Klein said seriously.

Deweyville hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "If that can solve the problem..."

He grabbed his cane as he spoke. He made his way feebly toward the staircase with the butler Cullen and several guards beside him, ready to support him if needed.

Klein surveyed the surroundings as he followed behind them silently.

One step, two steps, three steps... They arrived at the second story and entered the master bedroom.

Klein didn't have the time to survey the surroundings when the hair on his body stood on their ends.

This was feedback from his spiritual perception!

Sir Deweyville's bedroom was larger than the living room and dining room of Klein's house combined. It was partitioned into a place for a bed, a living space, a changing room, a bathroom, and a study desk and bookshelves. The furnishings were exquisite, and the details were extravagant.

But to Klein, the light seemed dimmer and the temperature was several degrees colder than the outside.

At the same time, he seemed to hear the sound of sobbing and moaning, as though one was putting up a last-ditch struggle.

Klein was in a trance, and everything suddenly returned to normal. The sunlight shone brightly through the window and poured over the entire bedroom. The temperature was reasonable, neither too high nor low. The surrounding policemen, bodyguards, and butler were quiet. No one spoke.

This... He looked sideways at the classic yet luxurious bed. He felt there were pairs of blurry eyes lingering in the shadow, like the moths that fearlessly stayed around gas lamps.

Taking a few steps closer, Klein lost the earlier images from his Spirit Vision.

Not a standard wraith or an evil spirit... What is it exactly? Klein frowned and recalled the mysticism knowledge that he had been learning all this time.

From what he had seen, the mission would have been easy if it was passed to a Corpse Collector, Gravedigger, or Spirit Medium. It was obviously not within his domain of expertise.

Holding back his urge to use divination as an investigative approach, Klein looked around slowly to look for other traces to confirm the few guesses on his mind.

"Inspector." Sir Deweyville hesitated and asked, "Did you discover anything?"

"If it were that easy, I believe my colleagues wouldn't have waited until now," Klein replied, glancing at the philanthropist subconsciously.

Just as he planned to retract his gaze, he suddenly saw that there was a faint white human figure reflected behind Sir Deweyville in the mirror behind him.

No, there were many figures overlapping each other, resulting in a white distorted figure!

The figure flashed by and Klein seemed to hear faint sobbing.

Phew... He let out a breath to ease his nerves, having almost drawn his gun out out of fright.

Heightened spiritual perception with Spirit Vision will one day scare me senseless... Klein tried relaxing his tense nerves by joking around before redirecting his focus back onto Sir Deweyville.

This time, he saw something different.

Now that he was in the bedroom, Sir Deweyville had a faint and twisted figure shimmering around him. It even dimmed the lighting of that area.

Every flash was accompanied by an illusionary cry and moan that could hardly be detected by an ordinary person.

Hardly audible for an ordinary person under ordinary circumstances? Is it because it's daytime? Klein nodded as he thought.

He had an initial judgment for this case.

It was resentment that was haunting Sir Deweyville. It was the remnant spirituality that resulted from unresolved emotions before a human's death!

If such feelings of resentment stayed in this world over a period of time, they would become a terrifying wrathful spirit after becoming stronger.

However, Sir Deweyville was a famous philanthropist. Even Benson, who was a picky person, was in awe of him. Why would he be bogged down with the resentment of the dead? Is he actually two-faced? Could it be the means of a Beyonder with nefarious intentions? Klein guessed the possibilities suspiciously.

After some thought, he looked towards Deweyville and asked, “Honorable Sir, I have a few questions.”

“Please ask.” Deweyville sat down wearily.

Klein organized his thoughts and asked, “When you leave here to go to a new place, such as the village or Backlund, do you temporarily get at least half a night’s worth of peace before the situation resumes and gradually worsens? Even when you sleep during the daytime, are you able to hear moaning and sobbing sounds?”

Deweyville’s half-closed eyes suddenly widened as his deep blue eyes were suddenly beaming with hope.

“Yes, did you find the root of the problem?”

Only then did he realize that due to his extended period of insomnia and his poor mental state, he had completely forgotten to inform the police about such an important clue!

Seeing that Klein’s question had uncovered something useful, Inspector Tolle relaxed. He knew that the Nighthawk had found a clue.

Sergeant Gate was surprised and curious too. He couldn’t help but look closely at the psychological expert, Klein.

It coincided with the traits of gradual entanglement and the feature of accumulation... Having received the feedback, Klein had basically confirmed the cause.

Then, he had two ways of helping Sir Deweyville to shake off the burden. One was to set up an altar directly around the man and remove the resentment of the dead entirely using ritualistic magic. The second option was to use other mysticism measures to find the root of the problem and solve it from there.

Taking into consideration the rule of preventing commoners from learning of Beyonder powers to the best of his abilities, Klein planned on first attempting the second method. Only if it failed would he pray to the Goddess.

“Sir, yours is a psychological illness, a mental problem,” he spoke nonsense with absolute seriousness while looking at Deweyville.

Sir Deweyville knitted his brows and asked in reply, “Are you telling me that I’m a mental patient, that I need to enter an asylum?”

“No, nothing that serious. Actually, most people have psychological problems to one degree or another,” Klein casually comforted him. “Please allow me to introduce myself again. I am a psychological expert from the Awwa County Police.”

“Psychological expert?” Deweyville and his butler looked at Inspector Tolle who they were familiar with.

Tolle nodded seriously and confirmed that it was true.

“Alright, what do you need of me for my treatment? Besides, I don’t understand why my butler, my bodyguards, and my servants will hear the sobbing and moaning as well...” Deweyville held his walking stick with both hands, looking confused.

Klein replied professionally, “I will explain it to you after it’s resolved.”

“Please tell your butler, your servants, and your bodyguards to leave. Inspector Tolle, Sergeant Gate, please leave as well. I need a quiet environment to begin the initial treatment.”

A "treatment" with magic... Inspector Tolle added in his heart and nodded at Sir Deweyville.

Deweyville fell silent for more than ten seconds before saying, "Cullen, take them to the living room on the second floor."

"Yes, Sir." Butler Cullen didn't retort since the request was made by a police officer, a probationary inspector, and a psychological expert.

After watching them leave the room one after another and closing the door behind them, Klein looked at Deweyville who had dark blond hair and blue eyes, and said, "Sir, please lie down on your bed. Relax and try to sleep."

"...Alright." Deweyville hung his coat and hat on the clothes rack before walking slowly to the side of the bed and then laid down.

Klein drew all the curtains, turning the room dark.

He took off his pendant and quickly used spirit pendulum to determine any dangers. Then, he sat on the rocking chair near the end of the bed, traced a spherical light in his mind, and entered Cogitation. He allowed the world of spirituality to extend before his eyes.

Then, he leaned against the back of the chair and fell into a deep sleep, allowing for his Astral Projection to make contact with the external world.

He was using the technique of dream divination, to let himself be in the spiritual environment like he was dreaming, so as to communicate with each and every resentment that plagued Sir Deweyville.

Only communication would be able to give him an answer and solve the problem!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

A sad sob reverberated in Klein's ear, and he "saw" that the white translucent figures were floating around him.

A painful groan echoed as Klein, who barely regained his mental processes, extended his right hand and touched one of them.

Suddenly, the figures swarmed at him like moths darting toward a fire.

The image before Klein's eyes suddenly turned blurry and his brain seemed to be cleaved into two. Half of his mind was calmly observing while the other half saw a "mirror."

In the "mirror," there was a young girl dressed in worker garbs. She looked strong and fit as she walked in a dust-covered factory while her head throbbed in pain.

Her eyesight occasionally turned blurry and her body became skinnier by the day.

She seemed to hear someone calling her Charlotte, and the voice said that she had a hysterical illness.

Hysterical illness? She looked towards the mirror and saw that she had a faint blue line on her gum.

...

The "mirror's view" switched and Klein saw another girl called Mary.

She too walked into the lead factory, young and lively.

Suddenly, half of her face started twitching, followed by her arm and leg on the same side.

"You have epilepsy." She heard someone say while her whole body was convulsing.

As she twitched and fell, the intensity increased before she finally lost consciousness.

...

There was another girl, and she was depressed. She was walking around the street in a daze, to the point of having a speech impediment.

She had a very bad headache, and she had a blue line on her gums. She would also convulse from time to time.

She met a doctor, and the doctor said, “Lafayette, this is a result of lead poisoning.”

The doctor looked at her with pity and saw her convulse again. She twitched continuously, and the doctor saw that her eyes had lost all their light.

...

Many images appeared before Klein, and he remained immersed within them and calmly observed.

Suddenly, he understood the plight of the girls [1].

The female workers had been in extended contact with white lead. They had all died of lead poisoning as a result of long-term exposure to the dust and powder.

Sir Deweyville had a lead factory under his name and also two porcelain factories. All of them hired comparatively cheaper female workers!

Klein “saw” all of that in silence, and felt that there was something that still had not been clarified.

Such “death resentment” was insignificant. They could not affect reality or have any effect on Deweyville even when accumulated.

Unless— Unless there was a more powerful and stubborn resentment that had united them all.

Just then, he “saw” another girl.

The girl was no more than 18 years old, but she was glazing the porcelain in the factory.

“Hayley, how are you doing lately? Do you still have a headache? If it gets too serious, remember to inform me. Sir Deweyville has enforced a rule that people with severe headaches cannot continue being in contact with lead and must leave the factory,” an elder lady asked with concern.

Hayley touched her forehead and replied with a smile, “Just a little, I’m okay.”

“Tell me tomorrow if it gets any worse,” the elderly lady exhorted.

Hayley agreed. When she returned home, she massaged her forehead from time to time.

She saw that her parents and brother had returned, but their faces looked hopeless.

“Your father and brother lost their jobs...” her mother said as she wiped her tears.

Her father and brother hung their heads low and muttered, “We will try to get some work at the harbor.”

“But we don’t even have bread money for the day after tomorrow... Maybe we will need to move to

Lower Street...” Hayley’s mother looked at her with reddened eyes. “When are you getting your pay?

It’s ten soli, right?” Hayley massaged her forehead again.

“Yeah, Saturday. Saturday.”

She didn’t say anything else and remained as quiet as usual. She returned to the factory the next day and told her supervisor that her headache recovered and she felt fine.

She smiled and walked five kilometers back and fro to work daily. She massaged her head more and more frequently.

“You haven’t found another job?” Hayley couldn’t help but ask her father and brother while looking at the soup which was boiling with black bread.

Her father said in frustration, “The economy is in a recession. Many places are retrenching. Even the harbor jobs are sporadic. I could only get three soli and seven pence a week.”

Hayley sighed and fell into her usual silence. However, she hid her left hand that was twitching suddenly.

On the second day, she walked to work again. The sun was shining brightly, and the street grew busier and busier with pedestrians.

Suddenly, she started convulsing all over.

She fell to the side of the road, foam spewing out of her mouth.

She looked up into the sky and her gaze turned into a blur. She saw people walking past and others getting close. She saw a carriage pass by with the Deweyville family emblem with a white dove with its spread wings as if ready to take off.

She tried hard to open her mouth, but she couldn't make a sound.

So, she didn't say a thing, quiet as ever.

But the difference this time was that she was dead.

---

1. The original inspiration for these girls come from Jack London's "The People of the Abyss."

The scenery started to distort, turning illusory and began to fade away.

After Klein left his dreamlike state, his vision adapted to the darkness in the room.

He knew that with one pound and ten soli, which was thirty soli a week, Benson didn't have an easy time supporting the family according to the standards of an average family.

He had thought that the majority of workers earned twenty soli a week.

He had once heard Melissa remark that Lower Street of Iron Cross Street had five, seven, or even ten families squeezing into the same room.

He also learned from Benson that as a result of the situation in the Southern Continent, the kingdom's economy was in a recession for the past few months.

He knew that a maid, with board and lodging provided, could earn between three soli and sixpence to six soli a week.

Klein extended his hand and pinched his glabella. He was silent for a long time, until Sir Deweyville asked, "Officer, aren't you going to say anything? The psychiatrists I went to would always speak to me and ask questions in such a situation.

"However, I must say that I feel at peace. I almost fell asleep. I haven't heard any moans or cries yet.

"How did you do it?"

Klein leaned back in the rocking chair. Instead of providing an answer, he asked with a gentle tone, "Sir, do you know about lead poisoning? Do you know about the dangers of lead?"

Deweyville fell silent for a few seconds. "I did not know about it in the past, but I do now. Are you telling me that my psychological illness stems from my guilt—my guilt toward the female lead and porcelain factory workers?"

Without waiting for Klein to answer, he continued just like he always had—in his position of power during a negotiation.

"Yes, I did feel guilty about this in the past, but I did compensate them. At my lead and porcelain factories, the workers do not earn less than other workers in the same industry. In Backlund, lead and porcelain workers are paid no more than eight soli a week, but I pay them ten, sometimes even more.

"Heh, many people criticize me for breaking ranks since it makes it hard for them to recruit workers. If not for the repeal of the Grain Act that made many farmers bankrupt, sending them to the cities, they would have had to raise their wages just like I did.

"Furthermore, I've also informed the supervisor of the factories to make sure that those with repeated headaches and blurry vision are to leave the areas where they are exposed to lead. If their illness is really severe, then they can even ask for help at my charity foundation.

"I think I have done enough."

Klein spoke without a ripple of emotion in his voice, "Sir, at times, you cannot imagine how important a salary is to a poor person. Simply losing work for a week or two can result in an irreversible loss to their family, a loss that would cause tremendous grief."

He paused before saying, "I am curious, why wouldn't a kind person like you install equipment that can protect against dust and lead poisoning in your factories?"

Deweyville looked at the ceiling and laughed ruefully.

"That would make my costs too high for me to bear. I would no longer be able to compete with other lead and porcelain companies. I no longer pay too much attention to my profits in these areas of my

business. In fact, I am even willing to fork out some money. But what's the point of keeping the business if I have to keep doing that? That can only help a number of workers and not become a standard in the industry or effect change on other factories.

"That would merely result in me forking out money to support the workers. I heard that some factories even secretly hire slaves to minimize costs."

Klein crossed his hands and said after a moment of silence, "Sir, the root of your psychological illness comes from the buildup of guilt, despite you believing that the guilt has faded and disappeared over time. It wouldn't have any visible effects under normal circumstances, but there was something that triggered you and set off all the problems at once."

"Something that triggered me? I'm not aware of such a thing," Deweyville said puzzled, but with conviction.

Klein allowed the chair to rock gently as he explained with a gentle tone, "You did fall asleep for a few minutes just now, and you told me something."

"Hypnosis?" Deweyville made a guess as he usually did.

Klein did not give a direct reply and instead said, "You once saw a girl dying on her way to work while you were on your carriage. She had died because of lead poisoning. She was one of your workers who glazed porcelain while she was still alive."

Deweyville rubbed his temples, speechless before saying somewhat doubtful, "I think that happened once... but I can't remember it clearly..."

His prolonged insomnia had left him in a poor mental state. He could only faintly recall seeing such a scene.

He thought for a moment, but gave up taxing his brain. Instead, he asked, "What was that worker's name?

"Well, what I meant was, what should I do to cure my

psychological illness?"

Klein replied immediately, "Two things."

"First, the worker that died by the side of the road was called Hayley Walker. That was what you told me. She was the most direct trigger, so you have to find her parents and give them more compensation.

"Second, spread information about the dangers of lead in the newspapers and magazines. Allow your charity foundation to help more workers who suffered from the damage. If you succeed in becoming a member of parliament, push for enacting laws in this domain."

Deweyville sat up slowly and laughed in a self-deprecating manner.

"I will do all of the rest, but to enact a law, heh— I think it's impossible since there is still competition from nations beyond our country. Setting up such a law would just slip the entire industry in the country into a crisis. Factories would become bankrupt one by one, and many workers would lose their jobs. Organizations that help the poor cannot save that many people."

He slowly got off the bed and adjusted his collar. He then looked at Klein and said, "Hayley Walker, right? I'll immediately get Cullen to retrieve information about her from the porcelain company and find her parents. Officer, please wait with me and continuously evaluate my mental state."

"Alright." Klein stood up slowly and smoothed his black-andwhite checkered police uniform.

...

At eleven in the morning in the living room of Deweyville.

Klein sat on the sofa in silence as he looked at the man and woman being guided into the house by Butler Cullen.

The two guests had blemished skin, wrinkles already woven into their faces. The man had a slight hunch while the woman had a mole under her eyelid.

They looked nearly identical to what Klein had seen through Hayley, just older and more haggard. They were so skinny that they were almost all bone. Their clothes were old and ragged. Klein even learned that they couldn't continue living on Lower Street of Iron Cross Streets any further.

Sob...

Klein sensed an icy wind start to spiral through his spiritual perception.

He pinched his glabella and shot a glance toward Sir Deweyville. It was unknown when a faint white, translucent, contorted figure had appeared behind him.

"Good-good morning, Honorable Sir." Hayley's parents were unusually polite.

Deweyville rubbed his forehead and asked, "Are the both of you Hayley Walker's parents? Doesn't she also have a brother and a two-year-old sister?"

Hayley's mother answered in fear, "Her-her brother broke his leg at the harbor sometime back. We got him to take care of his sister at home."

Deweyville remained silent for a few seconds before he sighed.

"My deepest condolences for what happened to Hayley."

Upon hearing that, the eyes of Hayley's parents immediately turned red. They opened their mouths and said over each other, "Thank-thank you for your goodwill.

"The police told us-told us, that Hayley died from lead poisoning. That's the term, right? Oh, my poor child, she was only seventeen. She was always so quiet, so determined.

"You had sent someone to visit her before and sponsored her burial. She is buried at the Raphael Cemetery."

Deweyville glanced at Klein and changed his sitting posture. He leaned forward and said with a serious tone, "That was actually an oversight of ours. I have to apologize."

"I have considered that I need to compensate you, to compensate Hayley. Her weekly salary was ten soli, was it not? One year would be five hundred and twenty soli, or twenty-six pounds. Let's assume that she could have worked for another ten years.

"Cullen, give Hayley's parents three hundred pounds."

"Three-three hundred pounds?" Hayley's parents were dumbfounded.

They never had more than one pound of savings, even at their richest!

It wasn't only them who were dazed. Even the expressions of the bodyguards and maids in the room were also all that of shock and envy. Even Sergeant Gate couldn't help but draw in a deep breath—his weekly salary was only two pounds and among his subordinates, only one chevroned constable earned one pound a week.

Amidst the silence, Butler Cullen walked out of the study and held a bulging sack.

He opened the sack and revealed stacks of cash, some one pound, some five pounds, but mostly made up of one or five soli.

It was clear that Deweyville had made his subordinates receive "change" from the bank earlier.

"It's an expression of Sir Deweyville's goodwill," Cullen handed the sack over to Hayley's parents after receiving confirmation from his master.

Hayley's parents took the sack and rubbed their eyes, looking at it in disbelief.

"No, this-this is too generous, we cannot accept this," they said as they held the sack tightly.

Deweyville said in a deep voice, "This is what Hayley deserves."

"Y-you truly are a noble, charitable knight!" Hayley's parents bowed repeatedly in agitation.

They had smiles on their faces, smiles that they couldn't repress.

They praised the knight repeatedly, repeating the same few adjectives they knew. They kept insisting that Hayley would be grateful towards him in heaven.

"Cullen, send them home. Oh, take them to the bank first," Deweyville heaved a sigh of relief and instructed his butler.

Hayley's parents hugged the sack tightly and walked toward the door quickly without stopping.

Klein saw the faint translucent figure behind Sir Deweyville attempt to extend its hands towards them, hoping to leave with them, but the parents' smiles were abnormally radiant. They didn't turn back.

That figure turned fainter and, soon, vanished completely.

Klein also sensed that the icy feeling in the guest hall had instantly returned to normal.

From beginning to end, all he did was sit there silently, not expressing his opinion.

"Officer, I feel much better. Now can you tell me why my butler, servants, and bodyguards could also hear the cries and moans? This shouldn't just be solely a psychological illness of mine, right?" Deweyville looked at him curiously.

Inspector Tolle, who knew the underlying truth, instantly became nervous.

Klein replied without much expression, "In psychology, we call this phenomenon—mass hysteria."

“Mass hysteria?” Sir Deweyville, who had met many psychiatrists recently, ruminated over the term Klein had said.

Despite their curiosity, his butler, bodyguards, and servants didn’t make a single sound since they had not been given permission by him.

As for Sergeant Gate, he looked towards Klein doubtfully as if he had never heard of that concept.

Klein controlled his habit of tapping the armrest with his fingertips and calmly explained, “Humans can be fooled easily by their sensory organs. Mass hysteria is a kind of psychogenic illness that is a result of tense nerves and other factors amongst a group of individuals as they influence each other.”

The jargon he spewed out confused Sir Deweyville, Sergeant Gate, and the rest, causing them to subconsciously opt to believe him.

“Let me give a simple example of this; this was one of the cases that I previously dealt with, one man held a dinner banquet and invited 35 guests. Midway, he suddenly felt disgusted and puked. After that, he even had severe diarrhea. After a couple times, he began to believe that he had gotten food poisoning. He shared his speculation with the other guests on the way to the hospital.

“In the next two hours, there were more than 30 guests that had diarrhea amongst the 35 guests, with 26 of them experiencing nausea. They flooded the entire emergency room of the hospital. “The doctors went through a detailed examination and performed cross checks, and they concluded that the very first man didn’t have food poisoning at all. Instead, it was a result of stomach inflammation caused by the change of weather and cold liquor.

“The most surprising fact was that none of the guests who went to the hospital had food poisoning. In fact, not a single one of them was sick.

“That is mass hysteria.”

Deweyville nodded slightly and marveled, “I understand now. Humans do lie to themselves easily. It’s no wonder that Emperor Roselle once said that a lie would become reality once it was repeated a hundred times.

“Officer, how may I address you? You are the most professional psychiatrist I have ever met.”

“Inspector Moretti.” Klein pointed at his epaulet and said, “Sir, your troubles have been resolved temporarily for now. You can try to sleep now while I determine if there are any other problems. If you are able to sleep well, please allow us to bid farewell ahead of time instead of waiting for you to wake up.”

“Alright.” Deweyville massaged his forehead, took his cane, and walked upstairs to his bedroom.

Half an hour later, a police carriage left the fountain at the door of Deweyville’s residence.

When Sergeant Gate got off on the way and returned to his police station, Inspector Tolle looked towards Klein. He complimented in jest, “Even I believed that you were a real psychological expert...”

Before he finished his sentence, he saw the young man in a black-and-white checkered uniform looking expressionless. His eyes were deep and serene as he forced a smirk on his face and said, “I only had some experience with it in the past.”

Inspector Tolle fell silent until the carriage arrived outside 36 Zouteland Street.

“Thank you for your assistance, allowing Sir Deweyville to be finally free from his problems and be able to find sleep again.” He extended his hand and shook Klein’s hand. “Thank Dunn on my behalf.”

Klein nodded slightly and said, “Alright.”

He went up the stairs and returned to the Blackthorn Security Company. He knocked and entered the captain's office.

"Done?" Dunn was waiting for his lunch.

"Done." Klein massaged his forehead, and kept his reply short and simple. "The root of the problem stemmed from the lead and porcelain factory under Sir Deweyville. From the moment they were established to this day, too many deaths have been caused by lead poisoning. And every accident left Sir Deweyville with some resentful spirituality."

"Generally speaking, that wouldn't bring too big of a problem. That might cause nightmares, at the most." Dunn had experienced similar cases with his plethora of experience.

Klein nodded slightly and said, "Yes, that's usually the case. But, unfortunately, Sir Deweyville encountered a female worker who died of lead poisoning on the streets. She collapsed by the side of the street and happened to catch a glimpse of the Deweyville's family emblem. She also harbored intense indignation, worry, and desires. It was only when Sir Deweyville gave her parents, brother, and sister a compensation of three hundred pounds did her emotions dissipate."

"This is a societal problem. It isn't rare in the Age of Steam and Machinery." Dunn took out his smoking pipe, smelled the tobacco, and sighed. "Workers that make linen work in damp environments, and are generally diagnosed with bronchitis and joint related ailments. As for factories with serious powder and dust issues, even if the dust isn't poisonous, it can still accumulate into lung problems... Sigh... We don't have to talk about this. As the kingdom develops, I believe these problems will be resolved. Klein, let's find a restaurant tonight to celebrate you becoming an official member, alright?"

Klein thought for a moment before saying, "How about tomorrow... Captain, I have used Spirit Vision for an extended period of time today and also used dream divination to directly interact with those resentments. I'm feeling especially drained. I want to return home in the afternoon to get some rest. Would that be okay? Oh, then I'll head over to the Divination Club at about four or five in the afternoon to see how the club members are reacting to news of Hanass Vincent's sudden death."

"No problem, that's only necessary." Dunn chuckled. "Tomorrow night it is. Let's do it at Old Will's Restaurant next door. I'll get Rozanne to make a reservation."

Klein took off his police peak cap and stood up to salute him. "Thank you, Captain. See you tomorrow."

Dunn lifted his hand and said, "Hold on, did you mention that Sir Deweyville gave the female worker's parents a compensation of three hundred pounds?"

"Yes." Klein nodded and immediately understood the reason why the captain had mentioned it. "You are worried that they will get into trouble because of their wealth?" Dunn sighed.

"I've seen many similar situations in the past. Pass me their address, I'll ask Kenley to arrange for them to leave Tingen for another city, to start life anew."

"Alright," Klein replied in a deep voice.

With all of that done, he left Dunn's office and entered the break room diagonally opposite. He changed into his original suit and left the police uniform in his locker.

Klein took the public carriage back to Daffodil Street in silence. He took off his coat and top hat. He then heated up the leftovers from last night and ate them with the last piece of wheat bread to fill his stomach.

Then, he went to the second floor, hung his clothes, and slumped into bed.

When he woke up, the pocket watch showed that it was already ten past two in the afternoon. The sun was hanging high up in the sky and the sunlight shone through the clouds.

Underneath the golden splendor, Klein stood next to his desk and looked out the oriel window. He watched the pedestrians in old ragged clothing as they entered or left Iron Cross Street.

Phew... He let out a breath slowly, finally overcoming his low spirits.

Every journey had to be taken one step at a time. Likewise, his Sequence needed to be advanced one level at a time. Everything worked like that.

He shook his head and sat down. He started concluding and reorganizing his encounter over the last week, so as to reinforce the important points in his mind to prevent himself from forgetting them.

Five minutes before three in the afternoon.

Above a blurry, boundless, grayish-white, silent gray fog stood a lofty palace. An ancient mottled bronze table sat there quietly.

On the seat of honor at the long table sat a man already engulfed by the thick gray fog.

Klein leaned against the back of the chair and contemplated. He suddenly extended his hand and tapped on the crimson stars that represented Justice and The Hanged Man.

...

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey lifted her dress as she quickly walked towards her bedroom.

Suddenly, she felt something and looked sideways at the shadow sitting on the balcony. As expected, she saw her golden retriever, Susie, who was sitting there in silence, observing her as always.

Audrey sighed and drew a crimson moon on her chest. She then got closer and looked down at her golden retriever from a commanding position.

“Susie, that’s not right. This is peeping. A Spectator has to observe in an open manner.”

The golden retriever lifted its head to look at its owner and shook its tail.

After nagging her dog, Audrey didn’t delay any further and continued walking towards her bedroom again.

In the few seconds of opening and closing the door, she suddenly had a weird idea.

“I wonder if Mr. Fool would allow Susie to enter that mysterious space. Then, there would be four members in the Tarot Gathering! And all of them would be Beyonders!

“No way, Susie can’t talk. If they were to let her express her opinion and share her thoughts, what would she do? Woof woof woof? Howl howl? Eww, why am I mimicking a dog’s bark here... “Just imagining such a scene feels really strange. A mysterious and solemn gathering with the sudden barking of a dog... Mr. Fool would definitely kick us out of the Tarot Gathering

directly...”

Audrey locked the door and sat by the side of her bed. She took out a piece of old yellowish-brown paper from underneath her pillow.

She read it repeatedly and entered her Spectator state.

...

In a particular area of the Sonia Sea, an old sailboat which was in pursuit of the Listener had already left the Rorsted Archipelago.

Seafarer Alger Wilson was worried that the wall clock’s machinery would malfunction, so he entered the captain’s cabin about half an hour earlier in case he had misjudged the time which would cause his subordinates to see him getting pulled into the Tarot Gathering.

In front of him was a glass of nearly transparent liquor. The rich aroma swirled strand after strand into his nostrils.

Alger trembled once again when he thought of the impending Gathering, the boundless fog that presented itself in front of him in the hotel's corridor, and the mysterious Fool who sat in the middle of the gray fog.

He lifted his glass and took a gulp, using the burning sensation in his throat to ease the emotions that had stirred within him.

Very soon, he restored his calm. He was as calm and stoic as he always was.

CHAPTER 93: NEW DIARY PAGE

Above the gray fog, gigantic stone columns held up a majestic divine hall.

Two dark red blobs extended out into faint human figures by the side of the ancient mottled bronze table.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Fool.” Augmented with a blurry effect, Audrey greeted him with a bow and smiled. “It is unfortunate that there is no wine here; otherwise, we could have a toast to your successful trial.”

She was referring to the ritualistic magic.

“You are more powerful than we imagined,” Alger Wilson praised as well.

Klein was surrounded by the thick fog as usual. He pressed down with his right arm and spoke with his normal tone, replying as though it was natural.

“Great, this means that we are on the path of excellence. If you have any matters to tend to that leave you unable to attend the gathering on Mondays, conduct the ritual and inform me. All you have to do is change the line in the incantation ‘I pray for a good dream’ with the reason.”

“Alright,” Audrey quickly agreed. “Mr. Fool, I obtained another page of Emperor Roselle’s diary. I believe I still owe you one page.”

“I was away from land this week and haven’t found any new pages.” Alger placed his right hand near his chest and bowed in apology.

“No matter. I expected my request to take a long time.” Klein leaned back into his chair and tapped the armrest with his index finger. He looked at Miss Justice and said, “You can express the contents of the diary now.”

Audrey bowed slightly and said, “As you wish.”

A pen suddenly appeared before her. She recalled the symbols that she had memorized and tried her best to transcribe them.

In seconds, she saw that the goatskin was already filled with content. The strange symbols neatly covered the entire page.

After checking the contents, she put down the fountain pen and said, “It’s done.”

Klein raised his hand and the goatskin parchment appeared in his palm.

Shifting his gaze down, he started reading without emotion.

“July 9th. I suddenly thought of an interesting question. Since the Sequence pathways are also called the ‘Blessings of The Divinities’ or ‘Paths of The Dive’, then why would the stone slate that records the completed twenty-two Sequence pathways be called the ‘Blasphemy Slate’. Blasphemy, what an interesting term... Just who is the one blasphemed?

“And who created the Blasphemy Slate? How could that person hold all of the Sequence pathways? Just what other information was on the stone? I really want to see it...

“July 12th. I’ve realized another fact today. The Sealed Artifacts are an important component of a church’s overall strength, even though some of the Sealed Artifacts are very, very dangerous. Among the seven churches, the God of Craftsmanship wields the least number of Sealed Artifacts which are also relatively less dangerous... Did I join an organization without a future? No, I should think of it this way; only a blank piece of paper can produce a good painting. A weak organization is the best place for me to display my abilities!

“July 14th. I saw that mysterious Mr. Zaratul again. I never expected him to be the leader of an ancient organization, the Secret Order!”

Klein's pupils constricted when he read this. He nearly revealed an unnatural expression.

The Zaratul family only had a certain connection with the Secret Order in the notes of the Church of Evernight. But now, he learned from Emperor Roselle that the mysterious Mr. Zaratul was further determined to be the leader of the Secret Order.

From the looks of it, it is an unquestionable fact that the Secret Order holds the Seer Sequence pathway...

While Klein was reading the diary, Audrey looked over and began observing him out of habit.

However, her field of vision was completely obscured by the thick fog.

Momentarily taken aback, Audrey snapped back to her senses and turned her head frantically to look at the other illusory dark red star.

I was too reckless, too insolent, too foolish in trying to observe Mr. Fool... I was lucky, lucky that he isn't angry. Audrey stuck out her tongue secretly and pretended to admire the scenery. She was just short of humming a lively tune.

Alger sat silently, his gaze never leaving the long bronze table. He knew his place, as if he was in the presence of a true god.

Klein collected himself and scanned the last portion of the diary.

"After learning that I had become a Savant, Mr. Zaratul mentioned that I had chosen a difficult, yet relatively safe path. I asked him why that was the case, but all he did was smile before telling me that the Sequence pathway contains secrets beyond my imagination. I couldn't help but ask him which Sequence pathway he selected. He told me that his Sequence 9 was Seer.

"I intentionally mocked him and asked if every Seer only disclosed half-truths, never explaining things more clearly. Furthermore, he was clearly a powerful High-Sequence Beyonder. There was no need for him to continue acting as a Seer!

"Mr. Zaratul told me that it was a habit he adopted from back when he was a Seer, and that this was a method that could pique my curiosity and make me cooperate with him. He hoped that I could help him steal a dangerous Sealed Artifact from the Church of the God of Craftsmanship, a relic of the Antigonus family.

"Clearly, this must wait until I become a core member of the Church of the God of Craftsmanship. I asked Mr. Zaratul how long it would take to digest the potion if I used the acting method, and what standards I should use to determine if I had digested it completely.

"He told me that for the lower Sequences, it would only take half a year to digest the potion as long as one strictly used the acting method. In fact, in the fastest case, it might only take a month. And standard measure for progress was simple; every Beyonder would sense it immediately once the potion was completely digested. It is what it is.

"I asked him for more details, but he merely smiled at me.

"To hell with his smiles, I'll beat up every Seer I see when I become a High-Sequence Beyonder!"

...Rest in peace, Emperor... Klein read the diary several times before looking at Justice and The Hanged Man again.

"Sorry for the wait."

"It is our honor." Audrey was still shocked, forgetting that she was a Spectator.

She looked at The Hanged Man and organized her words.

"Where can I find the Psychology Alchemists?"

Psychology Alchemists... Klein suddenly recalled the man buying supplementary ingredients for the Spectator potion at the Tingen underground market.

Perhaps he was a member of the Psychology Alchemists?

Just as Klein was considering how to get closer to that man, The Hanged Man, Alger Wilson shook his head and said, “Miss

Justice, firstly, I don’t have a clue. Secondly, I don’t think there’s any rush in seeking out the Psychology Alchemists. What you should focus on now is completely digesting the Spectator potion.”

Audrey glanced at The Fool and noticed that he didn’t have any intention of adding to the conversation. She nodded in disappointment and said, “All I want is to have plenty of time to prepare so that I can approach them more naturally. Alright, then when can I digest the Spectator potion and stop acting? Is there a standard that indicates when I can? I’m almost at the point where I no longer feel frustrated, nor do I hear the constant murmuring anymore.”

Alger looked at The Fool in the fog but saw that he didn’t have any intention of speaking. He then deliberated before saying, “If you don’t use the acting method, the typical rule of thumb is to wait three years and confirm that you no longer feel restless or receive any auditory or visual illusions. There is one simple test to determine when you can. That method is to exhaust your body to its limit. If you still don’t hear any maniacal murmurings or see any strange things at that point, that would mean that you’re ready to advance.”

“With regards to the acting method, I have also just come into contact with it. It feels good, so I don’t think it’ll take three years.”

That wasn’t useful at all... Three years, that’s too long... Audrey criticized inwardly.

She had just thought about this when she heard an armrest being tapped.

Audrey froze, then turned her head in joy. She saw The Fool tapping on the edge of the long table.

Alger sat straighter, waiting for The Fool to speak.

Klein said in his normal tone, “For Low-Sequence Beyonders, as long as you strictly stick to acting, you should be able to digest the medicine in half a year. It’s even possible to do it in a month.”

He looked at Justice and added, “As for the signs of digestion, you’ll know it when it comes. It doesn’t need to be taught.”

“One month... Great! Thank you, Mr. Fool!” Audrey exclaimed while brimming with joy.

Miss Justice, don’t think that you are the chosen one. The key point is half a year... Klein lifted his right hand and placed it beside his lips.

“Half a year...” Alger repeated softly.

Audrey sensed joy, relief, and intense doubt in his tone.

What is he suspicious about? Audrey thought as she asked, “Mr. Fool, have you considered adding more members?”

Klein leaned back casually. He had long prepared an answer. “This started as a trial, so I didn’t spend much time thinking about extending our meetings.

“But now, as a regular gathering, we must choose our members carefully. Secrecy is our motto.”

Audrey nodded gently and said, “That is to say that we have to follow a process of observation, recommendation, and testing process. Yes, a process.”

“You can interpret it that way,” Klein affirmed.

In his mind he was thinking about how he could inquire about the Secret Order and the Clown potion.

How can I ask questions in a way that befits my status? Klein was placed in a difficult spot.

At that moment, realizing that Justice temporarily had nothing else to say, Alger took the initiative to speak, “I’ve heard that a Listener from the Aurora Order is searching for traces of the True Creator, which is the holy residence they advocate.” “True Creator?” Audrey asked, puzzled.

“It is an ancient entity worshiped by numerous secret organizations and cults. They believe that the Creator hasn’t completely perished. The Core he left behind is the True Creator.” Alger gave a rough explanation. “Since the Fifth Epoch, the True Creator has appeared in many forms, such as The Hanged Giant or the Eye behind the Shadow Curtains. Heh heh, many people believe that Emperor Roselle referenced the imagery of the True Creator when he was creating the tarot cards; hence, there exists the card of The Hanged Man.”

At this point, he looked at Klein and said, “Mr. Fool, there’s nothing with what I said, right?”

Is he trying to probe for my views on the True Creator? Klein thought about the bloody man on the cross that the Captain saw in Hanass Vincent’s dream and immediately had an idea.

Doesn’t both the hanging and the shadows imply evil connotations?

Therefore, he chuckled and said, “I am more inclined to call him, the Fallen Creator.”

"The Fallen Creator... Fallen..." Alger ruminated over The Fool's words and fell deep in thought.

However, what struck Alger the most was The Fool's relaxed, natural, and nonchalant attitude.

He acted as if they were equal!

If he hadn't experienced their previous ritual, Alger might have thought The Fool was merely bluffing, and building himself up to intimidate him and Justice. But now, he was of the opinion that even if The Fool was inferior to the True Creator, he was at least close to that level.

It's dangerous. It's also an opportunity... Alger muttered softly. He then spoke with a smile, "Mr. Fool, your description is indeed more appropriate. According to our observations, Beyonders who believed in the True Creator, no—the Fallen Creator, have a higher probability of losing control. The rest of them are mostly psychopaths."

That's something that the Nighthawks' intelligence mentioned as well... And the so-called 'psychopaths' didn't lose their sanity; instead, their ideologies became twisted... Klein maintained his seated posture but didn't continue with the conversation.

He was still considering how to inquire about the Secret Order and Clown potion, but he couldn't figure out a way of asking the questions in a way that fit with his persona.

It's such a pity that the Gathering is still so different from an Internet forum. Otherwise, I could create another smurf account to join the Gathering, and that account would be in charge of asking questions that are inconvenient for me to ask... Perhaps, one day, I'll learn mirror-related magic and give it a try. For example, I can make half the members here my smurf accounts...

There are twenty-two chairs here, and there are twenty-two cards in the tarot deck. That matches up perfectly. But when I 'created' this divine hall, I didn't even name myself 'The Fool' or have any intention of forming a 'Tarot Club'. Hmm, do these symbolize the twenty-two different Sequence pathways?

I wanted a divine hall, so a divine hall appeared. If I wanted a smurf account, would I get a smurf account...

Upon seeing The Fool remain silently engulfed in the thick gray fog, Audrey asked both wistfully and curiously, "That sounds scary. Mr. Hanged Man, could you share, in detail, information about each, and every mysterious organization? And also the matters regarding each secret cult? It's hard for me to come into contact with them during my daily life. I can only understand them through the both of you. I'm willing to pay for it. May I know what you'd like in return?"

That's a great question! Miss Justice, you're playing the role of my smurf account to a certain extent... This way, The Hanged Man will definitely bring up the Secret Order... You're the best! Klein's mind stirred when he heard that, but he didn't let his emotions show through his expression or movements.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, "I need money—a thousand pounds. It'd be best if they weren't bills marked by a serial number. Or maybe gemstones that have just been unearthed. Price them according to the Backlund Jewelry Exchange's monthly average price."

A thousand pounds? That's a huge sum of money. It could be used to buy a house in a high-class street in Tingen City! Not everyone would have that available immediately... Captain might have an annual salary like that, I guess? Hayley's death compensation was only three hundred pounds... Although Miss Justice is a noble, she obviously hasn't inherited her family's wealth yet, and she'll only be receiving some sort of annual allowance... Hmm, it's no wonder that The Hanged Man stated that it could be paid via gemstones... Klein was very sensitive towards monetary figures. Luckily, he was blanketed in thick fog.

For a single lady or madam, two thousand pounds could let her live a decent life!

If two thousand pounds were invested, the investment could reliably produce an annual return of about a hundred pounds.

"A thousand pounds?" Audrey said, sounding shocked. She then replied happily, "No problem, do I send it to the previous address?"

Judging by Miss Justice's tone, she finds it very cheap? Klein didn't look over.

Alger was quiet for a good twenty seconds before he said, "Yes, send it to the Warrior & Sea Bar at Pelican Street, in the White Rose Borough of Pritz Harbor. Tell the boss, Williams, that it's what the 'Captain' wants.

"Alright." Audrey leaned back and posed in a Spectator-like manner. "Mr. Hanged Man, you can start now."

Alger looked at The Fool, deliberated for a moment before saying slowly, "Let's start from the Moses Ascetic Order. It is the earliest hidden organization. Of course, many think that the earliest hidden organizations are the Church of Evernight, the Church of Earth Mother, and the Church of the God of Combat.

"These people must be from the Church of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, or the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom," Audrey refuted sulkily.

The Church of the Goddess is the earliest hidden organization? That was the first time Klein had heard of such a claim.

What exactly happened in the Fourth Epoch or the Third Epoch?

Alger smiled and said, "The truth is buried in ancient history. Only one thing is certain: no one has ever said that the Church of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, or the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom were once hidden organizations.

"Alright, let's save some time and return to the main topic. The Moses Ascetic Order was first established by a few humans that had read the Blasphemy Slate. They believed in an nonanthropomorphic god, called 'the Hidden Sage'."

"The description is that of a god, but it is more of an ideology, a natural law. For example, all objects are numeric. The Hidden Sage is an embodiment of Spirit Numerology. Or that knowledge is supreme, and the Hidden Sage is knowledge itself. Hence, the original Moses Ascetic Order was a very respectable organization, and it maintained a good relationship with the other major churches.

"The members of the organization led ascetic lives to resist losing control and to resolve the effects of the Remnant potion. They strictly kept their order's secrets, and they upheld moral and religious precepts. They believe that humans continuously reincarnate after death...

"The Sequence 9 that they grasp is called Mystery Pryer... The word 'Warlock' was also spread from that organization."

Audrey listened to The Hanged Man's description carefully and asked sharply, "You said that the Moses Ascetic Order used to be a respectable organization. Are they not one anymore?" Alger nodded his head indiscernibly.

"Yes, they have fallen into corruption and are now an evil organization."

"Why? I find their beliefs very good and very normal," Audrey expressed her confusion.

That was Klein's confusion too. The information that he could get at his security clearance didn't provide the reason for the Moses Ascetic Order's fall from grace.

Alger looked at the unfathomable Fool and tersely agreed.

“I am not sure of the real reason. It might be because it has been buried by history. However, I have heard one terrifying explanation.

“In that story, the main reason why the Moses Ascetic Order fell into corruption was because the god that they believed in, the Hidden Sage, had come to life!

“He became the personification of an evil god!”

“Came to life? This... how?” Audrey found it unimaginable as she replied with an incredulous tone.

Without realizing it, she had exited from her Spectator state.

It’s like a horror story, but the ghost is even a god... Klein’s heart stirred with a surge of emotions as well.

“I’m sorry, no one knows the answer.” Alger had originally wanted to casually say, “Maybe Mr. Fool would know,” but he held back the urge.

He had already teetered on the borders of danger once.

In The Book of Storms 5:7, there was a saying that Alger remembered clearly, which was: “Thou shalt not test God!”

Audrey calmed herself down and didn’t press for more answers. She gestured for him to continue.

Klein maintained his seated posture and his silence, validating The Hanged Man’s descriptions with his own understanding.

Finally, he realized that there were four points that he needed to take note of.

First, the Demoness Sect was also known as the Demoness Family in the Fourth Epoch. Back then, they had very few members, and their beliefs were passed down through their bloodlines. Plus, they would kill the fathers of their children and abandon the baby boys. Hence, all the members were female. Of course, that was all from Alger’s description, and there was no way to verify it at the moment.

Second, the Numinous Episcopate that believed in Death and the Rose School of Thought that liked bloody sacrificial worship ceremonies both originated in the Southern Continent. After the colonial era came, they almost vanished under attacks by the seven churches. But as such, they began spreading to the Northern Continent.

Third, the current Psychology Alchemists was similar to the earlier Moses Ascetic Order. They believed in an nonanthropomorphic existence and believed that the human spirit could change everything.

Fourth, the Secret Order had the lowest activity level among all the other hidden organizations. Thus, they were the most unknown. Every time they appeared, they seem to be after something or looking for something.

What are they after or looking for? Klein suddenly recalled the diary which he had read earlier: The leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, cooperated with the Roselle. His goal was to get something left behind by the Antigonus family.

Their appearance that time was to look for the lost notebook, the Antigonus family notebook... Klein narrowed his eyes slightly and felt that he had apparently found the key reason for the Secret Order’s actions.

They are after the things that the Antigonus family left behind!

Klein suppressed his urge to tap the edge of the table as his thoughts appeared one after another.

Oh, they were looking for remnant traces the Antigonus family left behind?

Then must I direct my focus onto these areas to obtain the Clown potion formula from the Secret Order?

After a further exchange of information, Klein announced the end of the Gathering.

“By your will.” Audrey and Alger stood up together.

Cutting off the connections, he saw both their figures shatter and disappear. Klein rubbed his glabella and attempted conjuring a smurf account with his mind.

As he thought, a figure appeared at the furthest end of the long bronze table. That figure was wearing a black tuxedo, a silk top hat, and a dull expression. His actions were clumsy and inarticulate. Even though he was engulfed in gray fog, it was obvious that something was wrong with him.

That won’t do... Klein experimented a few more times before sighing and dismissing the idea of creating a smurf account.

He attempted other things too. He continued to sit above the gray fog in the seat of honor at the long bronze table. He considered what Audrey had said, and he cast his gaze curiously at the illusory crimson stars.

After a moment of silence, Klein started to pray as a form of feedback instead of establishing contact with those stars.

Amidst the tranquility and silence, he didn’t receive any feedback from the ten plus crimson stars nearby.

In order to receive feedback, I need to pull someone above the gray fog before I can reply? Klein nodded as he thought, feeling somewhat disappointed.

He didn’t want to violate someone else’s will and forcefully pull them into this mysterious space.

Hmm... Klein was just getting ready to leave, but he habitually touched a nearby illusory crimson star.

Just then, he suddenly felt that there was a faint and insignificant prayer deep inside the crimson star!

"A prayer?"

Klein's mind stirred as he used the same method he used back when he spied on The Hanged Man. He allowed his spirituality to spread outward and touch the crimson blob.

A hazy and contorted image appeared within his sight. He could faintly see a blond teen kneeling on the ground, facing a pure crystal ball.

That teenager was dressed in a tight-fitting black outfit, with a style very different from the contemporary styles of the Loen Kingdom. It was more congruent with the traditional clothing of the Feysac Empire and the Intis Republic that Klein had seen from reading magazines.

The area surrounding the teenager was dark and had old furniture. From time to time, the room would be illuminated, but Klein couldn't hear the roaring thunder or the pattering of rain.

In the image, the teenager had his hands on his forehead, fingers crossed. He bowed forward, continually praying for something. His thick accent buzzed in Klein's ears.

Klein listened attentively but discovered an awkward fact.

He couldn't understand what the other party was saying. It was a language that he had never come across in his life!

...To think that I cannot understand a foreign language even though I am the mysterious ruler of this world above the gray fog... Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh. He indignantly tried listening in once again in a manner more attentive than when he had to do English listening comprehension tests back on Earth.

As he was listening to the prayers, he gradually discovered something.

Even though he had never learned the language the young man was speaking, he found that it had similarities to Ancient Feysac!

Father... Mother... Those are likely the meanings of those two terms, right? It is quite similar to Ancient Feysac, but not without its differences... Klein creased his brows and slipped into deep thought. *Ancient Feysac was a common language in the Fourth Epoch. It is also the root language of all the contemporary languages of this era. Furthermore, it is still evolving... I cannot confirm it right now...*

He listened to it over and over again, eliminating the possibility of the language being a modern language like Loen, Feysac, or

Intis.

Could it be a dialect of Ancient Feysac? Like the language used in the Antigonus family's diary? Klein tapped his finger on the edge of the bronze table and nodded indiscernibly. *There was another possibility. Ancient Feysac didn't spring into existence out of nothing, it was an evolution of Jotun, the language of the Giants... The Feysac Empire in the north has always claimed that its people possesses the bloodline of the Giants. Perhaps, this is ancient Jotun.*

At this point, Klein, who lacked knowledge, could only stop. He retracted his spirituality, without looking or listening in to that scene.

He had no intention of pulling the praying teen up above the fog immediately. He wanted to know what the young man was talking about first.

Of course, before that, he had to observe him frequently and conduct basic 'tests'.

Phew. Klein exhaled as he leaned back in his chair.

He enveloped himself with his spirituality and simulated the feeling of falling.

...

After “revising” Roselle’s diary, Klein changed into his formal wear and left for the Divination Club.

He took the public transport despite his pay rise, but he did splurge to support Mrs. Wendy’s business. He spent 1.5 pence on sweet iced tea to combat the afternoon heat.

When he arrived at Howes Street, Klein tossed the empty cup into the trash can and walked up to the second floor.

Before entering the building, he pinched his glabella and activated his Spirit Vision.

Klein had just entered the hall when he felt a faint, lingering grief.

The pretty receptionist Angelica was sitting there; her slightly red eyes looked unfocused.

“The grief will pass in time,” Klein said with a gentle and firm tone as he walked toward Angelica.

Angelica looked up abruptly and muttered, clearly confused, “Mr. Moretti...”

She quickly came to her senses and asked, perturbed, “Y-you already know about Mr. Vincent?

“Oh right, I forgot that you’re an exceptional fortune-teller.” Klein sighed appropriately.

“I only managed to divine a very rough outline of what transpired... Just what exactly happened to Mr. Vincent?”

“The boss told us that Mr. Vincent had a heart attack in his sleep and left this world peacefully.” Angelica cried as she said, “He was so friendly, so polite, a true gentleman. He was the spiritual mentor of so many of our members. H-he was still so young...”

“I am sorry for bringing up this sad topic.” Klein didn’t console her any further. He walked toward the meeting room slowly.

Angelica took out a handkerchief and wiped her eyes and nose. She then looked at Klein’s back and asked loudly, “Mr. Moretti, what would you like to drink?”

“Black tea.” Klein preferred black tea to coffee, even though he found the black tea average.

In comparison, he preferred ginger beer and sweet iced tea. But as a gentleman, it was not right for him to act like a child in a formal setting...

As it was a Monday, there were only five or six members in the meeting room. Using his Spirit Vision, Klein saw that they each had different colors of emotion. Some were grieving, some more dull, some relatively unaffected.

They’re all rather normal... normal reactions. Klein nodded slightly. He picked up his cane and found a spot in the room.

He was about to deactivate his Spirit Vision when he saw Angelica walk in and walk towards him.

“Mr. Moretti, a customer is looking for you. Well, it’s the person from last time,” the beautiful lady said with a hushed tone.

“You still remember him?” Klein asked with a smile.

Hmm, I wonder if he bought the magical medicine as I instructed... I wonder if he still needs surgery...

Angelica covered her mouth and said, “He was the only person who was willing to wait an entire afternoon in the club for a divination.”

Klein grabbed his cane and stood up. He walked outside without saying anything.

In the reception area, he found the person who had sought his services the other day. He also noticed that the aura near his liver had regained its normal color. His overall health had also improved.

"Congratulations, the feeling of being healthy is wonderful indeed." Klein smiled as he extended a hand.

Bogda was first taken aback before he immediately extended both hands. He grabbed Klein's right palm tightly.

"Mr. Moretti, you truly can 'see' my condition!

"Yes, I have fully recovered! The doctors asked me questions over and over again, ran repeated tests on me, but they cannot believe that I recovered just like that!"

Upon hearing Bogda's ecstatic description, Klein calmly confirmed one thing—the apothecary at Lawson's Folk Herb Store was definitely a Beyonder!

He had seen how severe the man's liver disease had been. Fully healing him in the span of a few days was beyond the capability of herbs and medical ability. The only possible explanation was that of a Beyonder!

Coupled with the incident with Glacis, there could only be one answer.

"I have to repent to God. To think that I would suspect you, suspect that miraculous doctor." Bogda refused to let go of Klein's hand. He continued on about his shame and gratitude, "...those ten pounds were truly money well spent. It bought my life back!"

What? Ten pounds? You spent ten pounds on the miraculous medicine? And you only gave me eight pence for my divination... Just eight pence... eight pence... pence... Klein was dazed just hearing about it.

At this moment, Bogda released his hands as he took a step back while beaming. He bowed reverently and said, "I am here today to express my gratitude. Thank you, Master Moretti. You showed me the way and saved my life.

"This was the outcome of you paying to have something divined. You need not thank anybody." Klein lifted his head slightly and looked at the divide between the wall and the ceiling. His answer fully expressed the vibes of a charlatan.

"You are a true seer," Bogda praised. "Next, I'll be heading to Vlad Street to thank that apothecary and buy the medicine he recommended."

"Haven't you already recovered?" Klein expertly hid the shock in his voice.

Bogda looked around, and laughed when he confirmed that the receptionist was not paying attention to them. He chuckled softly and said, "The doctor mentioned a concoction of herbs that includes mummy powder. It is a prescription that would satisfy both men and women... I didn't believe the doctor back then, but I have no more doubts now."

...There's a prescription like that? Klein suddenly felt that the apothecary was a cheat, and suspected if he had pushed the person in front of him into a fiery pit of doom.

He observed Bogda and confirmed that there was no problem with his aura.

"Mummy powder?" Klein cautiously asked.

"Yes, mummy powder. I have asked a friend, he said that even the nobles of Backlund are maniacally looking for such an item. It's a powder made by grinding mummies which gives men peak performance in bed. Even though it's disgusting and sounds dirty, it truly is a material used by the aristocrats..." Bogda gave a detailed description. He had an eager desire in his eyes.

Mummies? Mummies made from corpses? Then grinding them to powder? Klein was dumbfounded. He nearly retched in front of Bogda.

Those nobles sure are hardcore... Just as he was about to advise Bogda against doing so, Glacis, who had suffered from a lung disease previously, stepped into the door and heard Bogda's description.

"Yes, it's very effective. I would recommend that you head to Lawson's Folk Herb Store at Vlad Street. Mr. Lawson's secret recipe is very effective!" Glacis took off his spectacles and leaned over with interest. He recommended with a hushed tone, "My experience was very, very, very perfect."

"You know of it too? I was just about to head to Mr. Lawson's Folk Herb Store." Bogda's worries vanished completely.

After a short conversation, he left the Divination Club in a hurry.

Up until then, Klein was still a little dumbfounded.

He waited till twenty past five in the afternoon before putting on his hat and picking up his black cane. He took a carriage down to Vlad Street, intending to observe the apothecary named Lawson Darkweed before deciding if he should notify the captain or not.

...

18 Vlad Street.

Klein stood outside the herb store and saw the closed door, as well as a subletting notice.

...*Quite a wary man...* he muttered silently.

Since this had happened, he no longer had to be troubled or perform any observations.

CHAPTER 96: DALY'S GUESS

By the afternoon of the next day, Klein had fully recovered from any signs of exhaustion. He walked into the Blackthorn Security Company with steady footsteps.

"Good morning, Klein. The weather is so cool and beautiful today, I'm looking forward to tonight's feast." Rozanne who was wearing a light green dress greeted him with a smile from behind the reception desk.

Klein deliberately touched his stomach and said, "Miss Rozanne, you shouldn't be talking about that so early in the morning! I'm already sick of today's mission that has yet to arrive. I only hope for the evening to arrive sooner." "Me too." Rozanne chuckled.

She looked to the left and right, then she beckoned for Klein to come closer. She lowered her voice and said, "I met Madam Daly earlier."

"Spirit Medium Madam Daly?" Klein asked in surprise.

The most famous Spirit Medium from Awwa County had been living at Enmat Harbor all this time, and it wasn't a short distance from Tingen.

"Yes." Rozanne gave a firm nod and said, "But, she has already left. Ah, she is my ideal Beyonder. If I were to become a Spirit Medium, I would leave Tingen and travel all around the world by myself. To Intis, to Feysac, to Feynapotter, to the Southern Continent; to the vast prairies, primitive forests, and snowcovered plains!"

Lady, be aware of the Nighthawks' rules... Klein shook his head in amusement.

"Even Madam Daly has to apply and obtain permission to leave Enmat Harbor."

"I know that, but you can't just remind me about it now and shatter my dreams!" Rozanne said peeved. "The truth is, I would never become a Beyonder. It's too dangerous. I don't know when I'll die from sudden gunfire. From what I've seen, Beyonders are basically people who turn themselves into monsters to fight against monsters."

"Archbishop Chanis said that we are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness," Klein replied, sighing. The quote had left a deep impression on him.

To fight against the abyss, we have to endure the corruption of the abyss.

The two of them fell silent in unison. Rozanne was the first to break the silence as she pursed her lips towards the partition and said, "Captain wanted you to meet him when you arrived."

"Alright." With his hat and cane in hand, Klein passed through the partition and entered Dunn's office after knocking on the door.

A middle-aged gentleman with deep and serene gray eyes and a high hairline put down his coffee cup and said with a smile.

"Daly was here."

"Can't say that I'm surprised; Rozanne had just informed me," Klein replied with a smile.

Dunn didn't mind his humor but sighed.

"Daly was just transferred to the Backlund diocese, which is the world's busiest and most crowded city. They have the highest population of Beyonders and the most opportunities... She has a higher chance of becoming an archbishop or a senior deacon than me."

"Why?" Klein asked curiously as he took a seat.

Dunn thought for nearly twenty seconds before answering, "She has a unique talent in mastering and exploiting Sequence potions... I've mentioned the internal rule of the Nighthawks before. If you want to consume the next potion in the Sequence, you'll have to wait three years and go through a strict examination to prevent any loss of control. But typically, three years is far from sufficient. I spent three years going from a Sleepless to a Midnight Poet. It took me nine years to go from a Midnight Poet to Nightmare—a full nine years. And to go from Nightmare to Sequence 6, I've already spent three years. I have no idea how many more years I need.

"When our bodies age and our energy starts to decline, even if we overcome the latent dangers, we shouldn't attempt advancing anymore. This is because the risk of losing control at that point is so high that no one is willing to risk it.

"As for Daly, she is different from me and most Beyonders. After she became a Corpse Collector, she handed in a special application after only a year. She hoped to consume the followup potion immediately. What surprised everyone was that she actually passed through the stricter examination and obtained the Gravedigger potion.

"It only took her one more year to go from Gravedigger to Spirit Medium. Heh, this year will be her fifth year as a Beyonder. She is only twenty-four this year, young enough to have many opportunities ahead of her."

On the surface, she's the most famous spirit medium in Awwa County, but she truly is an actual Spirit Medium... Isn't that acting? Old Neil had apparently mentioned that Madam Daly had similar tendencies... Klein felt that he had grasped the key reason for Madam Daly's quick ascension through the ranks.

"Captain, you're young enough as well. You're only in your thirties," Klein comforted Dunn, but added in his heart, *It's just that your memory isn't that great...*

Dunn drank a sip of his coffee. He shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"Why didn't you ask Madam Daly about her method of mastering and exploiting Sequence potions?" Klein purposely asked.

Dunn put down his coffee cup and massaged his temples as he spoke.

"She told me to become a true Nightmare... I don't know what that means."

Play the role of a Nightmare. Man, a Nightmare sounds sinister... Klein creased his eyebrows and temporarily fell silent.

Then, Dunn took out his smoking pipe and sniffed at it.

"Daly and I discussed the possibility of Seer's follow-up potion being Clown. Assuming that the member of the Seers didn't lie to you, she brought up an interesting hypothesis."

"What hypothesis?" Klein asked hurriedly, his eyes turning bright.

He had once used a divination method to determine if Clown was the follow-up potion of Seer. The answer he received had been vague, but it seemed close to being a confirmation.

Dunn's deep and serene gray eyes swept his gaze at him while he said in thought, "A normal Sequence pathway proceeds in a stepped manner. They advance according to a particular similarity. For instance, Sleepless, Midnight Poet, and Nightmare are all obviously related to the darkness of the night, as well as the peaceful sleep and tranquility that is generated from sleep. It can be imagined that every subsequent Sequence would have identical traits, only with more power and a wider scope. They might be linked to secrets, disaster, horror, the crimson moon, etc...

“Certain Sequence pathways appear unrelated, but when we analyze them in detail, we can still find similarities, such as Assassin and Instigator. Their implied similarity is to bring people calamities, pain, sorrow, and despair. Hence, the followup Sequences should abide by this pattern.”

Klein paid close attention and asked proactively, “But Seer and

Clown doesn’t have such a connection?”

“Yeah.” Dunn nodded and said, “Daly believes that there might be Sequence pathways that share another kind of relationship. After all, there’s a lot we do not know.”

He paused for a moment before saying, “Daly said that, in this sort of pathway, the low to mid Sequence potions would respectively provide the Beyonder an ability that seems brand new and unrelated to the others. When the Beyonder reaches a point of qualitative change, these abilities will mix into an abnormally powerful ‘job’ that includes them all.”

“In other words, the pathway doesn’t advance step by step, but instead it’s a relationship of dissection and combination.”

Klein listened intently, but he felt lost. Dunn lifted his right hand and said, “A normal Sequence pathway advances a bit at a time, just like a child growing up. A growing child becomes taller, stronger, heavier, and more mature from a young age.”

“While special Sequence pathways are more like...” Having said this, Dunn lifted up his thumb.

“This is Sequence 9.”

Then, he lifted up his index finger.

“This is Sequence 8.”

Then, he gradually lifted up the rest of his fingers.

“Each and every finger is independent, and doesn’t seem to be related to the others. But in the end...”

When he said the word ‘end,’ Dunn clenched his fingers into a tight fist!

“I understand now.” Klein was suddenly enlightened. He agreed with Lady Daly’s guess and the Captain’s metaphor.

Maybe that’s how it is? He nodded in deep thought.

Sequence 8 Clown and Sequence 9 Seer are completely different and have brand new abilities. And according to the description from the Nighthawks’ intelligence, the corresponding Sequence 7 and Sequence 8 Clown don’t share any similarities either...

Klein fell silent for a while before curiously pressing on, “At which stage would the different abilities combine to form a qualitative change?”

Dunn took another sip of coffee and chuckled.

“Daly and I guessed Sequence 4!” “Why?” Klein blurted out.

“Because according to the way the churches categorize Sequences, Sequence 4 is the beginning point of the higher Sequences. It is said that merely achieving such a level brings about qualitative changes in vitality and energy. In ancient times, Sequence 4 Beyonders were qualified to be called demigods in the Fourth Epoch. It’s a pity that such Beyonders are very rare in this era,” Dunn said wistfully.

“If Sequence 4 to Sequence 1 are High-Sequence Beyonders, then who are the Low-Sequence Beyonders?” Klein asked with interest.

“Sequences 9 through 7 were considered as Low-Sequences a thousand years ago. But, in recent centuries, Beyonders are few in number and each church has listed Sequence 7 as a MidSequence.” Dunn laughed in a self-deprecating manner.

Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 are Low-Sequences. Then, Sequences 7 through 5 are Mid-Sequences. Finally, those Sequence 4 and above are High-Sequences... Klein repeated in his head and inevitably felt a yearning for that.

Emperor Roselle was a High-Sequence Beyonder!

However, the higher the Sequence, the greater the risk of losing control... Klein thought to himself in fear.

He asked as though in a seemingly casual manner, “What is the Sequence 4 potion for the Church of the Goddess called?”

“In actual fact, I’m not sure. My security clearance isn’t high enough for me to be privy to that information. I’ll be able to read them when I become a diocese bishop or Nighthawks deacon.” Dunn shook his head and smiled. “In fact, at least half of the Church’s thirteen archbishops and nine senior deacons at the top of the Church’s hierarchy are below Sequence 4. Hmm, that’s just me being optimistic. The archbishop Ince Zangwill, who became wanted, lost control when he tried to advance to Sequence 4.”

The one who stole Sealed Artifact ‘0-08?’ His potion was apparently called Gatekeeper... Klein thought and probed, “Is Sleepless Sequence 5 Gatekeeper?”

“No, that’s in Spirit Medium’s pathway. You’ll be allowed to access that information when you reach Sequence 7 and become a bishop or a Captain of a Nighthawks team.”

Gatekeeper is Sequence 5 of the Spirit Medium pathway? Does it mean that it’s keeping watch over the gates to Hell? Or keeping watch over the gates to the Spirit World? Klein guessed.

“Alright, go to Old Neil and continue with your studies.” Dunn smiled and said, “Don’t forget about dinner tonight, at Old Will’s Restaurant. Reservations have been made. I’ll introduce you to the rest of the Nighthawks officially.”

“Alright, I’ve already prepared the money.” Klein forced a smile.

“No, there’s no need. Have you forgotten that we have additional bonuses? The part about you completing an assigned mission.” Dunn waved.

Klein was momentarily taken aback before replying with a beaming smile, “Alright, Captain.”

He turned around and walked towards the door, while counting inwardly, *Three, two, one... Eh, why didn’t Captain call me back?*

Klein dragged out “one” for a very long time, only to be surprised that Captain Dunn Smith hadn’t forgotten add anything.

A miracle...

...

In the armory, Old Neil stole a glance at Klein, who was in a good mood.

“Don’t be obsessed with tonight’s dinner. You still have a lot of things to learn, such as more ritualistic magic, ancient Hermes, Dragonese, Elvish, and many more.”

“Yeah, every afternoon besides your day off, you have to have at least two hours of combat training with an instructor.”

“Combat training? Captain didn’t mention it...” Klein was shocked.

Old Neil nodded and didn’t hesitate to answer, “He forgot.”

CHAPTER 97: COMBAT TEACHER

At two in the afternoon, outside of a simple two-storied building that was in disrepair at the outskirts of the North Borough.

Klein, who was in his probationary inspector uniform, looked at the weed-filled garden and the vines that had crept up the walls. He turned his head in surprise.

"My combat instructor lives here?"

Shouldn't a combat artist who was selected by the Nighthawks be exceptional...

Leonard Mitchell, who had guided Klein there, snickered and said, "Don't underestimate Mr. Gawain because of his residence's surroundings. Although he was never conferred an aristocratic title, he was a true knight back in the day."

Having said that, the poetic Nighthawk, who was dressed in a white shirt, black trousers, and buttonless leather boots suddenly felt melancholic.

"He was active during the waning era of the knights. The warriors donning their armors would storm through enemy ranks despite the gunfire and cannon fire, destroying their enemies and redefining the battle lines. But alas, they were quickly met with the invention of the high-pressure steam guns and six-barrel machine guns. From then on, the knights had to gradually step down.

"Mr. Gawain met the same fate. More than twenty years ago, the Awwa Knights' Order of Chivalry faced the most advanced weaponry of the Intis Republic army... Sigh, every time I recall this, it seems like I'm touching the dust heaps of history. The poet in me stirs when thinking of this irreversible and fated destiny, but alas, I do not know how to compose the poem."

...Then what's the point in saying so much? Klein acted oblivious to Leonard's self-deprecation and gave a serious suggestion, "My university schoolmate once told me that the composing of poems requires a certain degree of talent. It's best you start by reading the Classical Poems Anthology of the Loen Kingdom."

Leonard's mood changed on a whim. He replied with a lighthearted tone, "I purchased that book a long time ago, as well as other titles, such as the Selected Poems of Roselle. I will work hard to become a true Midnight Poet, Mr. Seer"

Is he hinting at the... acting method? Klein replied, as though he couldn't understand him, "You would still need books on grammar."

"Alright, let's enter." Leonard extended his hand and pushed open the half-closed metallic gates. The two of them then followed the path towards the house.

They were still a distance away from the house when Klein saw a tall man walking out from behind the main door.

He had short blond hair, his brows already laced with white hairs. His facial features looked like they had been ravaged through age, his wrinkles were etched deep across his face.

"What are you doing here?" the aged man asked in a deep voice. "Mr. Gawain, as per your contract with the police department, this probationary inspector will be learning the art of combat under your guidance," Leonard explained with a smile.

"Combat? There's no need to study combat in this era." Gawain looked at Klein with turbid eyes and said in a dead voice, "You should learn how to draw your gun and shoot. You should master the most advanced weaponry."

Was this the psychological trauma caused by the six-barrel machine guns and high-pressure steam guns? Klein didn't give a reckless reply; instead, he smiled and looked at Leonard.

“The art of combat is still a skill a policeman has to master. Most of the criminals we face are not those who must be executed on the spot. Some might not even have weapons. In that case, we have to rely on combat techniques,” Leonard said, obviously prepared for the situation.

With a dark expression, Gawain fell silent for more than ten seconds before saying, “Throw a punch.”

He was speaking to Klein.

Klein, who was not holding his cane, remembered the boxing matches he had seen in his previous life. He raised his arm and threw it forward.

Gawain’s lips twitched indiscernibly. He thought for a moment and said, “Kick.”

Tilting to the side slightly and twisting his hips, Klein tightened his thigh muscles and kicked forward with his right foot.

Cough... Gawain covered his mouth and cleared his throat. He looked at Leonard and said, “I will honor my contract. But based on his foundation, he needs to come here four times a week, three hours each time, for the first month.”

“You’re the combat expert. It’s up to you.” Leonard nodded without hesitation. He smiled and said to Klein, “See you at dinner.”

After Leonard walked out the metallic gates, Klein asked out of curiosity, “Instructor, how should I begin practicing? Punching, or footwork?”

As a qualified keyboard warrior, he understood the importance of footwork in combat.

Gawain stood akimbo as he shook his head lethargically.

“What you need now is strength training.

“See those? Those are two dumbbells made of steel. They shall be your partners for today.

“Other than that, you also have to practice deep squats, running, and rope-skipping. Let us take those one set at a time.”

While Klein was still in a daze, Gawain suddenly raised his voice and said sternly, “Understood?”

“Understood!” At this moment, Klein felt as though he had returned to military training and was facing an inhumane instructor.

“Change out of your clothes. There’s a set of knight’s training clothes on the sofa.” Gawain suddenly sighed. He turned around and walked toward the black steel dumbbells.

...

Six in the evening, at a corner table of the Old Will Restaurant.

Other than Frye, who was guarding Chanis Gate, all the members of the Blackthorn Security Company were present. There were six Nighthawks and five civilian staff.

A white tablecloth was draped over the long table. Waiters carried over plates of food, portioned them before serving them to each individual guest.

Klein saw steaks drenched in black pepper sauce. He saw bacon, sausages paired with mashed potatoes, egg puddings, asparagus, and specialty cheeses. He even saw rose-colored champagne. However, he had no appetite. The training in the afternoon had nearly made him vomit.

Noticing the pale, newly-inducted Nighthawk with turbid eyes, Dunn raised the glass of red wine in front of him and laughed.

“Let us welcome our newest official member, Klein Moretti, cheers!”

The cold and introverted black-haired lady, Royale Reideen, the Sleepless Kenley White, the sloppy Leonard Mitchell, as well as the white-haired, black-eyed Midnight Poet Seeka Tron all raised their cups and looked at the new member of their team.

Klein fought back the discomfort of the training and raised his glass of amber champagne. He stood and said, “Thank you.”

He clinked glasses with every Nighthawk, tilted his head back, and finished the small amount of champagne.

“Is our Miss Author not going to say something on this occasion?” Dunn smiled as he looked at Seeka Tron.

Seeka Tron was a lady in her thirties. She had average looks, but had an exceptional demeanor, one that was quiet and serene. Coupled with her few strands of graying hair, it added a unique charm to her.

Klein had heard Old Neil mention that this Midnight Poet had taken on a side job as an author and had attempted to submit her works to newspapers and magazines. Unfortunately, only a few smaller newspapers had accepted them.

Seeka smiled and looked at Dunn.

“In order to make the term ‘Miss Author’ into a reality, Captain, I think you should give me some funds to self-publish my work.” Dunn laughed.

“You should learn from Old Neil and give me a more suitable reason.”

“I’m most impressed with Mr. Neil in this department!” Rozanne echoed in-between her mouthfuls of roast mutton.

Amidst the chatter and laughter, Leonard looked at Klein and said with a chuckle, “Are you so tired that you have no appetite to eat?”

“Yeah.” Klein sighed.

“If you haven’t touched your food yet, I can be of assistance.” Leonard acted as though he didn’t want to waste any food.

Klein didn’t mind. He nodded and said, “That wouldn’t be an issue.”

And with that, a good portion of the food in front of him was eaten by Leonard and the rest.

Nearing the end of the dinner, the waiters served plates of beef pudding and ice-cream.

Klein tasted ice-cream and found it cold and sweet. It was particularly appetizing.

Before he realized it, he had finished the ice-cream drizzled with a blueberry sauce.

And as a result of this, he started to feel the hunger pangs. It was a hunger which demanded recharging food that came after intense exertion.

Swallowing his saliva, Klein looked to the front, only to see that all the plates were empty. There were no leftovers.

“Let’s end the dinner here, and give Klein a final toast,” Dunn suggested.

Before finishing his sentence, Klein asked, “Captain, may I order another plate of food?”

The group fell silent after hearing such a request, only to break out into chuckles moments later.

“Haha, you’ve finally recovered. No problem, order two plates if you want to.” Dunn shook his head and laughed.

While patiently waiting an unbearable amount of time, Klein heard his stomach growling.

Finally, a freshly prepared black pepper steak was served before him.

His fork and knife danced as Klein finished the medium-done steak in ninety seconds, tears nearly falling from his eyes. The meat juices and the fragrance of the sauce lingered in his mouth.

Sometime later, Klein let out a satisfied sigh as he looked at his empty plate. He put down his knife and fork and took a sip of his champagne.

“Waiter, the bill please.” Dunn turned around and called for the waiter.

The waiter went to the counter, then returned with the check. He gave a thorough breakdown,

“You opened five bottles of Desi Champagne, each bottle being twelve soli and three pence, a small glass of Southville Red Wine for ten pence... Each black pepper beef steak was one soli two pence... Each serving of beef pudding was six pence, the servings of ice cream was one soli each... The total would be five pounds, nine soli, and six pence.”

Five pounds, nine soli, and six pence? That’s nearly my weekly salary! A restaurant is indeed much more expensive than eating at home! Klein clicked his tongue upon hearing that. He felt lucky that the Captain had said that he didn’t need to pay out of his own pocket. They had some petty cash from bonus earnings!

He calculated the cost carefully and noticed that the most expensive portion of the meal was the alcohol. Five bottles of champagne had cost more than three pounds!

This is no different from Earth... Klein secretly rubbed his stomach and forced down the last of his champagne.

...

The next morning, Klein felt bloated. He tried to get off the bed in his sleepy stupor.

Just as he exerted strength, he was instantly awakened by his aching muscles. He felt as though his body wasn’t under his control.

“What a familiar feeling... It’s the same as that day after we got punished with frog jumps. Today is a rest day, but I still have to pay a visit to my mentor and see if I can borrow the monograph on the Hornacis main peak from the library at the University...” Klein’s lips twitched as he made his way outside with some effort.

He wanted to draw a gasp with every step.

“Klein, what happened to you?” Melissa, who had just come out of the bathroom, sized up her brother suspiciously for his odd posture and slow movement.

Faced with his sister's question, all Klein could do was reply with a regretful smile, "Sore muscles."

He originally believed that by consuming the Sequence potion, his constitution would be enhanced as a Beyonder, but the harsh reality told him that a Seer's stats points were all allocated to his spirituality, mind, intuition, and interpretation. It didn't aid him in adjusting to combat training quickly.

As for the original Klein, he had focused on his studies early on and had suffered from malnutrition. That led him to possess a below-average physical condition. The fact that he was having 'after effects' from working out was to be expected.

"Sore muscles? I remember you returning after dinner last night and you didn't do anything else... Does alcohol cause sore muscles?" Melissa inquired with an inquisitive look.

Does alcohol cause sore muscles... Sis, that question... can't help but make me have inappropriate thoughts... Klein laughed dryly and said, "No, this has nothing to do with alcohol. It was from yesterday afternoon. I joined the company's combat training." "Combat?" Melissa was even more astonished.

Klein organized his thoughts and said, "Well, this is what happened. I considered it and believe that as a historical and relic consultant of a security company, it's impossible for me to stay in the office or port warehouse forever. Perhaps there will come a day when I have to accompany them to the villages or an ancient castle, to the site of some relic. That might require me to hike, to cross rivers, and to walk a lot. I'll have to endure all sorts of tests posed by nature, so I have to possess a sufficiently healthy body."

"So you joined combat training to enhance your stamina?" Melissa seemed to understand her brother's intention.

"That's right," Klein answered with great affirmation.

Melissa said with a frown, "But that isn't gentlemanly... Don't you always keep yourself to the standards of a professor? A professor only requires the ability to read historical documents, ponder over difficult questions, and maintain a polite and gentlemanly demeanor.

"Of course, I'm not saying that those aren't all good things. I prefer men who can solve problems on their own, regardless of whether that solution requires brawn or brain." Melissa smiled.

Klein smiled and said, "No, no, no, Melissa. Your definition of a professor contains a misconception. A true professor can communicate with people gently and politely, but he can also educate the other person using the principles of physics by raising a cane to convince someone when there is an obstacle in communication."

"Principles of physics..." Melissa was momentarily at a loss, but she quickly understood what her brother was saying. She was suddenly unable to retort him.

Klein didn't say anything more but widened his pace with great difficulty as he headed for the bathroom.

Melissa stood there and looked for a few seconds. She suddenly shook her head and caught up to Klein.

"Do you need my help?"

She posed as if she was supporting someone.

"No, there's no need to. I was hamming it up a bit earlier." Klein felt humiliated. He suddenly stood straight and walked normally.

Watching her brother walk steadily to the washroom and close the door, Melissa pursed her lips and muttered, “Klein is getting more and more pretentious... I even believed that his muscle soreness was really that serious...”

In the bathroom, Klein stood behind the tightly shut door, his face suddenly contorting in pain.

Ouch, ouch, ouch... He held his breath, tensed his body, and stood there for a good seven or eight seconds.

When he finally went downstairs with great effort, had breakfast, and saw Benson and Melissa off, his soreness finally began to ease.

After resting for a little while, Klein took his cane, donned his top hat, and left the house, strolling towards the public carriage stop.

...

During the summer, Khoy University had trees with shadeproviding foliage, flourishing with birds and luxuriant flowers. It was peaceful and calm.

Walking along the river, Klein took a turn towards the history department. Then, he found the three-story building which showed its age and located his mentor’s, Cohen Quentin’s, office.

He knocked and entered the room, but he was shocked to see that the man sitting at his mentor’s seat was the academic, Azik.

“Good morning, Mr. Azik, Where’s my mentor? We made an appointment by letter to meet here at ten,” Klein asked, puzzled.

Azik, who was Cohen Quentin’s best friend and often debated with his mentor regarding academic topics, smiled and said, “Cohen had a last minute meeting and went to Tingen

University. He asked me to wait for you here.”

He had bronze skin, an average height and build, black hair, brown eyes, and gentle facial features. Being in his presence brought on an indescribable feeling, as though you could see in the man’s eyes that he had been through the vicissitudes of life. Under his right ear was a tiny mole that one wouldn’t notice unless closely examined.

Having said the reason, Azik suddenly frowned as he carefully observed Klein.

Feeling confused by the sudden scrutiny, Klein looked at his attire. “Have I committed some breach of etiquette?”

Tuxedo, black vest, white shirt, black bow tie, dark colored trousers, leather boots with no buttons... Everything seems normal...

Azik’s brows eased and he chuckled softly.

“Don’t mind me. I suddenly noticed that you are way more energetic than before. You look even more like a gentleman now.”

“Thank you for your compliment.” Klein accepted it calmly and asked, “Mr. Azik, did my mentor manage to find the book ‘Research of the Hornacis Main Peak’s Relics’ in the school library?”

“He found it with my assistance,” Azik said, smiling gently. He then pulled open the drawer and took out a gray-covered book. “You are no longer a Khoy University student anymore. You can read it here, but you cannot take it home.”

“Alright.” Klein delightfully took the academic monograph, and with a hint of fear.

The book’s design was fully in-line with the current trends; it used hard paper as a hardcover and it was printed with an image like an abstract version of the main peak of Hornacis mountain range.

Klein took a glance and found a seat. He flipped open the book and started reading carefully, line by line.

As he became engrossed in the book, he suddenly realized that there was a cup of rich and fragrant coffee by his side.

“Help yourself to the sugar and milk.” Azik put down the silver saucer and pointed at the milk jar and sugar container.

“Thank you.” Klein nodded with gratitude.

He added three cubes of sugar and a teaspoon of milk before continuing to read his book.

The book, Research of the Hornacis Main Peak’s Relics, was not a very thick book. Klein finished reading it when it was almost noon. He took note of a few noteworthy points.

First, the settlement on the main peak of Hornacis Mountain and its surrounding area was obviously an advanced civilization, which existed as part of an ancient nation.

Second, from their wall murals, their perspective on life appears similar to that of humans. I can assume for now that they were human.

Third, they revered yet feared the darkness of the night. Hence, they called their god the Ruler of the Evernight, Mother of the Sky.

Fourth, the weirdest part is that researchers haven’t found any graves in the entire area, which initially seems to indicate that the people didn’t need to be buried, because they didn’t die. However, that would be contradictory to the contents of the wall murals. In the wall murals, the people in the nation believed that death is not the end. They believed that their deceased family would protect them in the night. Hence, they would keep their deceased family members at home, on the bed, by their side, for a full three days.

There is nothing beyond that for the wall murals as it doesn’t involve burials.

Klein took another sip of coffee and continued to write down his ‘afterthoughts’ in his notebook.

Mother of the Sky, Skymother is such a grand title, while the Ruler of the Evernight obviously overlaps with the Evernight Goddess... Is this a contradiction at its roots?

In the ancient remains on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range and its surrounding area, every arrangement and decoration was well-preserved. Even the wall murals didn’t have any signs of damage. Before it was discovered, there seemed to be no disturbance at all... The table was arranged with cutlery, and there were dried stains of rot on the dining plates... In some rooms, there were half-filled bottles of alcohol that had almost turned into plain water...

What happened to the nation’s people? They seemed to have left their homes in a hurry, without taking anything with them, and they never returned.

Considering how there are no burial grounds, this only makes it weirder.

The author, Mr. Joseph, also mentioned that when he first discovered the remains, he even had the belief that the people residing there had just vanished all of a sudden.

Klein stopped writing and cast his gaze at an illustration.

On John Joseph’s third visit to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, he had used a new camera model to shoot a monochrome photograph.

In the photo, the lofty palace had a collapsed wall and was overgrown with weeds. It followed a grandeur style for its design.

When he flipped to the photograph, Klein’s first thought was that of the palace he had seen in his dream.

The two styles were identical. The only difference was that the one he had dreamed of was on a peak and it was way more magnificent. It also had a huge chair—a seat of honor—that looked like it didn't seat a human. Countless translucent maggots clustered together and squirmed slowly beneath the chair.

I can confirm that my dream is related to the ancient remains on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range... That should be the Nation of the Evernight which was referenced in the Antigonus family's notebook... Klein nodded slightly and closed the book.

At that moment, Azik, who was sitting opposite him touched the inconspicuous mole under his right ear and said, "How was it? Found anything?"

"Quite a bit. Take a look, I've written so many pages of notes." Klein pointed at the table and smiled.

"I don't understand why you're suddenly so interested in this matter." Azik sighed and said, "Klein, when I was studying at the Backlund University, I had dabbled with some divination and did quite a bit of research on that. Well, I discovered that there is disharmony... in your fate."

What? Divination? Are you talking to me about divination? As a Seer, Klein looked at Azik the academic in amusement.

"How is it disharmonious?"

Azik thought for a moment.

"Have you encountered many strange coincidences in the past two months?"

"Coincidences?" As he was indebted to Mr. Azik, Klein didn't dispute his question as he subconsciously began thinking.

If we are talking about coincidences, the most obvious matter was when we were after kidnappers. We actually managed to find clues of the Antigonus family's notebook that was lost for days in the room opposite the kidnappers.

Also, Ray Bieber didn't flee from Tingen in a hurry; instead, he found a place to digest the power bestowed by the notebook, allowing for Sealed Artifact 2-049 to track him down easily. That seemed to be against common sense. Although Aiur Harson gave a reasonable explanation, I always had a nagging feeling that it was somewhat coincidental...

Oh, Selena had stolen a glance at Hanass Vincent's secret incantations, but she held back till her birthday dinner banquet to try it out, and I happened to discover it, which is quite a coincidence too. Otherwise, Hanass Vincent wouldn't have been the only one to die so suddenly...

Klein thought about it seriously for a few minutes and said, "There are three. Neither too many, nor too frequent.

Furthermore, there was nothing that indicated someone's involvement and guidance." Azik nodded slightly.

"As Emperor Roselle once said, a single coincidence is encountered by anyone. Twice is still normal. Thrice is when one should consider what internal factors are influencing those coincidences."

"Can you tell me anything else?" Klein probed.

Azik laughed and shook his head.

"I can only tell that there's some disharmony, but nothing else. You have to understand that I'm not a real seer."

Isn't that basically equal to saying nothing... Mr. Azik is quite odd... He's playing a charlatan in front of a charlatan like me... Klein let out a breath, seizing the moment when Azik stood up, he pinched his glabella and activated his Spirit Vision.

When he looked over, Azik's aura fully appeared before his eyes and everything seemed fairly normal.

Unfortunately, I can only see the Ether Body and Astral Projection of a person above the gray fog... Klein thought carefreely as he tapped his glabella again whilst standing up.

Late in the afternoon, Klein returned home and drew the curtains, allowing his room to slip into darkness.

He took out his pen and paper and thought for a long time, finally writing down a sentence: “The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements.”

As a Seer, Klein had tried to divine if those coincidences were a consequence of unnatural developments, but the results showed otherwise.

This time, he was influenced by Azik to look into these events again. He also drew lessons from the suited clown. He seriously designed an appropriate divination statement, eliminating any descriptions that might be vague or cause confusion.

“Yes, I should break down the three coincidences and divine them separately...” Klein nodded in thought as he slowly removed the topaz from his wrist.

He held the spirit pendulum with his left hand and allowed it to hang close over the divination statement on the paper.

He collected himself and entered a state of Cogitation. With his eyes closed, Klein started chanting repeatedly, “The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements.”

...

As he recited the statement over and over again, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the pendulum, only to see the topaz turning counterclockwise slowly.

“It’s still a negative...” Klein muttered to himself. He designed several other divination statements, but the results persisted— there was nothing strange about that incident.

He then separately divined the “event of Ray Bieber’s stay in Tingen” and “Selena’s magic mirror divination incident,” but the answers for both events were normal.

Heh, was I, a real Seer, frightened by the charlatan Mr. Azik? Besides, Captain and the others didn’t feel that anything was off... Klein laughed and shook his head. But he remained cautious. He planned on using the dream divination technique to get a final confirmation.

After some thought, he changed the divination statement to fit the change in method.

“The true reason for Elliott’s kidnapping.” As he scribbled with the fountain pen, Klein paused and pondered over his words.

After reading it over and over again, he tore the slip of paper and walked toward his bed. He relaxed and laid down.

With the divination statement in hand, Klein quickly fell asleep with the help of Cogitation.

He found himself in a contorted, broken world. Regaining his senses, he began swimming through the blur.

Gradually, he saw the few kidnappers. He saw them lose their final chip at a gambling table, saw them obtain guns from underground sources, and saw them survey the area. They even rented the apartment across Ray Bieber’s apartment as their hideout...

These didn’t form a continuous scene, instead, they were presented in the form of flashing pictures. Klein couldn’t find anything that was abnormal.

Furthermore, it had also aligned with the statements given by the kidnappers.

After exiting the dream, Klein separately divined the other two incidents but had the same result. Their developments followed logic. The coincidences were really coincidences.

“I was indeed overthinking things. Mr. Azik is merely a divination enthusiast...” Klein stabilized his pendulum and shook his head with a bitter smile.

He was about to draw the curtains and allow sunlight into the room when he froze.

“From the original Klein’s impression of Mr. Azik, he is a dependable and trustworthy person. He had never once said anything baseless. Even if he was always quarreling with Mentor, it was limited to academic topics, and each of them had their reasons... If he was truly a mere divination enthusiast, he wouldn’t have interacted with me like that... And the memories of original Klein has nothing about him liking divination... Of course, this could be due to the loss of a corresponding memories...” Klein frowned and couldn’t ease his worries. He needed a way to confirm this.

He suspected that Mr. Azik had unwittingly come across some insider information and was trying to remind him by using divination as an excuse.

“How should I confirm this?” Klein paced back and forth across the dark room, trying to recall the other divination techniques he knew.

One step, two steps, three steps. He suddenly halted as an idea came to him.

“Let’s assume that these coincidences are dubious. I’m unable to divine a result either because my Sequence isn’t high enough or I’m being affected by outside interference, but I can change my environment! I can change my environment to someplace that is even more mysterious and even harder to understand.” Klein felt pumped. He pulled open his drawer and took out a silver dagger.

He concentrated and allowed his spirituality to flow out from the tip of the dagger, becoming one with his surroundings.

With each step he took, the wall of spirituality sealed off the entire room.

Klein planned on doing the divination above the gray fog, to do the divination in that mysterious world!

...

In the magnificent ancient divine hall above the endless gray fog.

Klein sat at the seat of honor on one end of the bronze table. Before him was a piece of goatskin he willed into existence.

He lifted a pen and tried writing the divination statement as he had previously.

“The kidnapping of Elliott was due to Beyonder elements.”

He held the spirit pendulum and hung it low. Klein quickly composed himself as he turned silent and ethereal.

Half-closing his eyes, he recited the statement seven times, using his spirituality to interact with the spiritual world that stood above all.

Feeling the tug of the silver chain, Klein opened his eyes to look at the pendulum.

The sight made him freeze immediately.

The pendulum was spinning clockwise!

This meant that there was a Beyonder element behind Elliott’s kidnapping!

This was completely different from the result he had gotten in the outside world!

There were no traces of any interference... Such power or means is terrifying... What’s the motive of the person behind this? Is my fate intertwined with the Antigonus family’s diary? Klein was immensely shocked. He lost his calm and the rotation of the pendulum slipped into chaos.

He put down the topaz and rubbed his glabella. His expression was abnormally grave.

After contemplating for a few seconds, he didn't attempt to divine the other two events. Instead, he wrote a new divination statement: "The true reason for Elliott's kidnapping."

He held the paper in his hand and recited the statement seven times. Klein leaned back and fell into sleep above the fog.

Soon, he saw a boundless, illusory grayish-white fog.

The fog dissipated slowly, revealing a colorful lawn filled with flowers.

The space behind the flowers and the plains was folding into itself, like a monster that had come alive.

Klein tried his best to look forward, barely making out an image of a dark red chimney.

At this point, the scene before him shattered, putting an end to his dream.

Klein abruptly straightened his back in the majestic divine hall. His heart was beating wildly without reason.

Phew... It felt like I had just spied on a terrifying thing... He took in two deep breaths to stabilize his chaotic emotions.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein tapped on the side of the table sometime later and slipped into deep thought.

Red chimney... garden... lawn... How is this related to the person behind all of this? I cannot determine his motive from the coincidences, nor can I conclude that there is any evil intent...

In the midst of this thinking, Klein felt alarmed, for himself, Captain, Frye, and the others.

We are like puppets dancing on a string. What's even scarier is that we thought so highly of ourselves...

Sigh... I don't know how to raise this matter to Captain. Old Neil's divination produced the same results as mine in the outside world... If they asked me to confirm it in front of them, I have no way of doing that... Klein rubbed his temples as if he had a headache.

After nearly twenty seconds of calm, he began divining the "event of Ray Bieber's stay in Tingen." Similarly, he first used spirit dowsing.

This time, Klein was shocked to see his topaz hang motionless. It was neither a confirmation or rejection of the statement.

"Strange..." he muttered. He started to guess the reasons for this phenomenon, "The person behind this has sensed my divinations and engaged in countermeasures?"

Following this, he tried the dream divination technique, but all he saw were fragmented pieces of fog. He no longer made any new discoveries.

The results of "Selena's magic mirror divination incident" were the same.

Klein could almost confirm his conjecture at this point. Since he had no way of notifying Captain Dunn Smith for the time being, he had an unprecedented motivation to improve his abilities.

"I must head to the Divination Club later and quickly succeed in my 'acting' to digest the Seer potion... Also, I have to confirm whether the Clown potion is indeed the subsequent Sequence of Seer, as well as gather clues about it... In addition, I have to interact more with Mr. Azik and see if I can dig up whatever inside information he holds..." Klein held his forehead with his right palm and quickly drew up a plan, and determined his focal point.

After some thought, a goatskin appeared in front of him again. He picked up his pen and wrote:

"The corresponding Sequence 8 of Sequence 9 Seer is Clown."

From his prior experience, the present Klein was completely convinced that his divination abilities were augmented and enhanced above the gray fog.

“Just like how raids are usually successful... is this the result of having good luck?” he muttered and picked up his spirit pendulum.

Sometime later, Klein received a definitive answer:

The corresponding Sequence 8 of Sequence 9 Seer was Clown!

He then wrote on the paper once again.

“The corresponding Sequences 8, 7, 6, and 5 of Seer would grant at least one brand new, unrelated power.”

Klein exhaled as he tried spirit dowsing again.

However, he saw the topaz hang motionlessly without any rotations.

“There isn’t enough information to complete the divination and receive a revelation?” he muttered to himself while seemingly deep in thought. Then, he set down the silver chain and began considering the required statement for a dream divination.

Nearly twenty seconds later, he picked up his fountain pen and wrote seriously: “Clues to the Clown potion.”

"Clues to the Clown potion."

...

On the seat of honor at the ancient bronze table, Klein repeated the divination statement a few times before leaning back and entering a deep sleep.

His surroundings quickly became peaceful and quiet. He saw a hazy view, with countless distorted and blurry scenes flashing past, just like drops of morning dew on tender flower petals.

Gradually, Klein grasped his spirituality and came to his senses.

He saw a fireplace before him with a rocking chair in front of it. Sitting on it was an old woman dressed in black and white.

Although he couldn't see her face since she was hanging her head low, Klein's gut feeling told him that she was an old lady. And he was pretty certain about it.

The old lady was facing a desk directly. There were newspapers and tin cans inlaid with silver on the desk.

"This is..." Klein found the scene before his eyes very familiar, and he quickly recognized what he saw.

This was where Ray Bieber and his mother stayed!

This was where he saw a bloated cadaver for the first time!

"There are clues that point to the Clown potion here?" Just as Klein's thoughts flashed past, the scene around him transformed.

It was a grayish-white warehouse, hidden among identical buildings.

There were white bones scattered all around, and a few balls of flesh that looked like they had been squashed by a boulder.

In the middle of the warehouse was a grayish-white object that was the size of a fist. Its surface was filled with ditches and it looked soft but ductile. It looked like a brain that had been extracted out of a living being.

Just as Klein recognized the scene and recalled something, the scene before him distorted like rippling water before transforming into another new blurry scene.

A naked body was laid on a long table covered with a white cloth. There were some bluish, discolored patches on the corpse's skin.

Klein suddenly knitted his eyebrows and muttered, "It was first the images of Ray Bieber's hiding place and his remains, and now, it's related to the brand on the suited clown's wrist?"

Just as he attempted to speculate what the scenes meant, the scene suddenly changed again.

A marble coffee table, a set of two leather couches, and a chandelier that hung high on the ceiling.

There were three people—Klein Moretti, who had black hair, brown eyes, and a scholarly temperament; a wealthy man with a chubby body and pale skin; and a beautiful young lady with fishnet gloves.

Following that, it was another three people and an object—a middle-aged man in a black robe who had thick spiky brown hair; a wealthy man with a chubby body and pale skin; a halfcentury-old elder with messy eyebrows, thin brown hair, and gray-blue eyes; and a black notebook on the round table inbetween all of them, a notebook that exuded an ancient and distant air.

The Antigonus family's notebook!

Klein suddenly sat up straight and the dream vanished.

Looking outside the divine hall where there was boundless gray fog and crimson stars, he thought in both shock and confusion.

I was divining for clues to the Clown potion... Why would the Antigonus family's notebook show up?

Let me think, let me think, that chubby guy was Welch. Yes, Welch, an unfortunate fella who bought the Antigonus family's notebook and triggered a sequence of incidents... The beautiful young lady wearing fishnet gloves was Naya...

I remember, the marble coffee table and leather couch combination is a hallmark of Welch's place. I saw Spirit Medium Daly there.

In other words, what I saw was Welch's living room. It was a scene where the original Klein and his two classmates were discussing the notebook.

Klein calmed himself down and tapped on the edge of the long bronze table rhythmically.

Then, what does the last scene represent? The notebook appeared, Welch appeared. Could it be the scene where he bought the ancient item?

There were another two people, and one of them looked very familiar. I feel like I've seen the middle-aged man in the classic black robe somewhere before... That spiky brown hair, severe dark eye circles... Yes, I know who is he now. Hanass Vincent from the Divination Club, the Hanass Vincent who 'died peacefully' after Captain snuck into his dream, having learned that Selena secretly obtained the secret incantation from him!

No way, he was the one that sold the notebook to Welch?

Everything appears to be coming full circle. The world sure is small, no—Tingen is really small! On careful thought, it really is a possibility that Hanass Vincent wasn't an ordinary fortune-teller. He was obviously deep into mysticism and obtained the attention of an ancient evil god. He had the channels, ability, and opportunity to acquire the notebook that was accidentally released by the Secret Order...

It's no wonder Captain and company never figured out where Welch bought the notebook. Their investigative approach was entirely wrong. They had attempted to investigate via the antique market... But when the actual whereabouts of the notebook was found, they gave up on that lead.

What a pity, Hanass Vincent just passed away not too long ago. Otherwise, we definitely could've found out something regarding the notebook... Since he was involved in mysticism, he should've researched the notebook... His death was way too coincidental!

However, there was another person at the scene, a man in his fifties. He might know quite a bit of what happened.

Klein stopped tapping his fingers on the edge of the table and looked through every scene of his dream divination once more.

Ray Bieber's house, Ray Bieber's hideout spot, the remains of Ray Bieber, the brand on the suited clown's wrist, Welch's house; Welch, Naya, and original Klein's exchange; Welch, Hanass Vincent, and the Antigonus family notebook's 'group photo'. Hehe, besides the brand on the suited clown, everything else is directly related to the Antigonus family's notebook!

But I had divined for clues to the Clown potion... This isn't scientific, nor does it make mystical sense!

After becoming a Seer, Klein once tried to divine where Welch had bought the Antigonus family's notebook, but he never considered using the unique qualities that the area above the gray fog possessed. As such, he had failed to receive any revelations, but now, he had chanced upon the truth by divining something separate.

After spending nearly twenty seconds to calm down, Klein summarized the context provided by Roselle's diary and attempted to interpret his dream divination.

The first possibility: Zaratul or should I say, the Secret Order, was searching and pursuing the relics of the Antigonus family. So, the symbolic meaning of the dream is to use matters related to the Antigonus family to lure the Secret Order into appearing, so as to obtain the Clown potion's formula.

The second possibility: the Clown potion's formula is directly recorded in the Antigonus family's notebook... The fact that the Zaratul family is seeking the relics of the Antigonus family implies that they share very deep connections. They could've been allies or enemies. Hence, it seems fairly natural that the Antigonus family possessed parts of their Sequence. Things would be obvious if they were allies, but enemies are the ones who would know each other the best...

But the second explanation wouldn't be able to link it to the brand on the suited clown. Sigh, I do wish that the second explanation were true though. When the Holy Cathedral finds an expert to interpret the notebook, I would be able to obtain the Clown potion without any risk.

It seems that the first explanation is the most plausible. My gut feeling as a Seer tells me that there might be a deeper symbolic meaning.

Having thought of this, Klein massaged his forehead and suddenly realized the limitations of a Seer.

Unless it was a very simple and straightforward sign, a Seer had to be extremely careful when making interpretations. It was just like walking on the edge of the abyss or walking on a thin layer of ice over a lake's surface. The suited clown's outcome was an actual and bloody example of what a single mistake in interpretation or failure to grasp a key point could result in!

In that instant, Klein had an illusion of himself mastering the true essence of a Seer. He seemed to be just one step away from digesting the potion completely.

"Thank you for enlightening me with your life... Praise the Lady!" he muttered and drew a crimson moon before his chest.

Then he divined whether Azik had good intentions or if he was an amazing Beyonder. He received confirmations for both of them.

Eventually, the continuous divinations exhausted Klein. He had no choice but to stop churning through his thoughts and decide on the crucial matters that he needed to attend to.

I have to find the man that appeared in the same scene with Welch, Hanass Vincent, and the Antigonus family's notebook as soon as possible!

I can begin my search with the Divination Club.

I can't just confront Mr. Azik. Yes, he might be a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Life School of Thought, but there's a lack of information, making it impossible for me to divine...

Phew. Klein let out a breath and conjured the portrait of the halfcentury-old elder with messy eyebrows, thin brown hair, and gray-blue eyes on the goatskin that appeared before him.

This was the third person present when the Antigonus family's notebook was traded between Welch and Hanass Vincent!

Looking at the portrait, Klein suddenly fell into a dilemma.

I can't draw. During art class in primary school, I was always the one receiving the greatest criticism from the teachers.

Should I use ritualistic magic like Old Neil? This was done by praying to the Goddess... If I were to use the uniqueness of the area above the gray fog... I would be in trouble if the divinities noticed something amiss!

Hold on a second, perhaps I can pray to myself! Transmitting images and transmitting voices are similar... Although I'm temporarily unable to access the mysterious power above the gray fog, accomplishing such a minor matter shouldn't be a problem!

Having thought of this, Klein immediately emanated his spirituality to envelop himself to simulate the feeling of falling.

Back in his bedroom, he lit the gas lamp and 'prayed.'

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck;

"I pray for your revelation and pray that you allow me to draw what I've seen."

After reciting the incantation, Klein didn't splash essential oils or burn any herbs to gain the help of their powers.

It was just that informal when praying to oneself!

There were suddenly murmurs in his ears as he saw the four black dots that formed a square surface on the back of his hand.

He walked four steps counterclockwise and recited the incantation before penetrating the maniacal chaos to return to the area above the gray fog.

This time he didn't see any of the crimson stars shrinking or expanding. But behind the seat of honor at the long bronze table, the strange symbol formed by a partial Pupil-less Eye and partial Contorted Lines shimmered weakly as it produced illusory prayers.

Klein held his ear to it and listened. After making sure that there were no mistakes, he conjured the portrait of the 'third person', and cast it towards the flowing light in accordance to the prayer's format.

After everything was done, he immediately left the mysterious world above the gray fog and returned to his bedroom.

Just as he found his footing, a portrait surfaced immediately in front of Klein's eyes. Furthermore, he sensed a weak and illusory power augmenting him.

He picked up a fountain pen and found a piece of white paper and expressed his intent.

Klein was surprised to find his right hand moving uncontrollably as it quickly drew lines.

Before long, he saw a lifelike portrait of the 'third person'.

After writing down the hair and eye colors, as well as other unique characteristics, Klein heaved a sigh of relief despite the spasms of his right hand.

The illusion before his eyes rapidly dissipated.

CHAPTER 101: UNEXPECTED CLUE

Howes Street, Divination Club.

Klein pressed down on his half top hat and walked along the stairway towards the main door.

He wasn't dressed in his usual formal wear. Today, he was wearing a white shirt and a light-colored vest, paired with a thin black trench coat, making him look more spirited than he had before.

This set of clothing was more suitable for combat and had only cost him one pound, including the fee for the small pocket that he had sewn into the vest. Compared to the suit he had purchased, it was so cheap that it brought tears to his eyes.

He stroked the revolver in his holster, as well as the metal bottles in his tiny inner pocket. Klein then took out the portrait and entered the Divination Club.

Without any surprise, he met the beautiful attendant, Angelica.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti. I thought you would come only a few days later." Angelica was taken aback at first before she immediately revealed a brilliant smile.

Klein took off his hat and sighed.

"Good afternoon, Miss Angelica. I had a dream at noon. I dreamed about Mr. Hanass Vincent and matters regarding him.

You know that, as a fortune-teller, I absolutely cannot overlook any dream. It could be a revelation from the divine."

Confused by his charlatan-like words, Angelica nodded in thought and asked out of curiosity, "What did you dream of?"

"I saw Hanass Vincent arguing with someone." Klein passed her the folded piece of paper in his hand.

As Angelica unfolded the portrait, he pinched his glabella and observed the color of her emotions.

"This person..." Angelica looked at the realistic portrait and slipped into deep thought.

Klein saw her emotions turn into a 'thinking blue', a normal reaction.

"This person..." Angelica muttered once again. She slowly looked up and said, "I've met him before."

Klein's mind whirled as he immediately asked, "When was it?"

"I can't remember the exact date. Maybe a month ago? I saw him send Mr. Vincent to the door and they were softly discussing something. I have a deep impression of him because of his thick and messy eyebrows, as well as Mr. Vincent's rare smile," Angelica described as she recalled. "Yes, he had a pair of grayishblue eyes and, like most men his age, had little hair on his head."

"Did you meet him again before or after that?" asked Klein gently.

Angelica shook her head.

"No, I am certain of that. I don't even know his name. To be honest, if it wasn't you, I would have suspected that any person showing me a portrait like this is a policeman investigating Mr. Vincent's death. Heh, I don't find it odd no matter what revelation you receive, for you are a true Seer."

My apologies, I am a policeman... Klein retorted silently as he sighed and said, "A true Seer would understand how minuscule he truly is compared to the vastness of fate. We can only see a hazy corner, forever receiving revelations, but never answers. We must reflect upon them constantly and keep up our respect and fear. We must decipher these hints with caution and not see ourselves as the intelligent ones who have taken control of fate."

By summarizing what he had figured out over the past few weeks, Klein suddenly realized that his Spirit Vision turned clearer. He could even faintly make out the details within Angelica's aura.

At that instant, he felt like a shortsighted man who was wearing glasses that suited him.

This... has my Seer potion begun to produce clear signs of digestion? Klein was stunned in disbelief.

"I never imagined that a Seer like you can still maintain such fear and respect towards fate. It's truly admirable," said Angelica earnestly.

She had seen too many people in the Divination Club who claimed to see through the truth and change fate after learning a few divination methods.

Klein retracted his gaze and chuckled.

"The more you know, the better you can understand how small we truly are."

As he was saying this, he checked his body's condition and reflected on his past experiences. He could basically narrow the essence of the 'acting' technique to 'actions corresponding to the name of the potion, understanding the hidden laws governing the role, as well as strictly abiding by these laws'.

Only by doing so could he change the state of his body, heart, and soul, making them closer to the remnant psyche in the potion, so as to gradually digest it.

The acknowledgment of a Seer's identity was only a factor on the surface. The reason why it made one's spirituality feel light had to do with how the feedback strengthened one's affirmation of particular divination actions. And these actions collectively formed the rules for digesting the Seer potion.

To help others interpret revelations and guide them in a better direction; yet constantly maintain one's fear and respect towards fate. One cannot be too egoistical, too proud, or blindly believe one's interpretations... These are the laws I can think of for the time being, as well as the essence of the 'acting' technique that will guide me towards the future. If it continues to be this successful, I won't need half a year. Perhaps in two or three months, or even two to three weeks time, I'll be ready to completely digest the potion.

...That sign was extremely obvious. It's no wonder the mysterious Mr. Zaratul said that the Beyonder will clearly sense it when the potion is fully digested. There's no need for anyone to teach them. It is what it is... Just like now, although my Spirit Vision has been enhanced a little, I know very well that this is only a pit stop in the digestion process and not the final destination.

With this in mind, Klein couldn't help but thank the suited clown for teaching him with his life!

If it wasn't for him, he would probably spend months at the Divination Club, summarizing the rules of a Seer through numerous attempts—for better or for worse—before he began

'acting' strictly.

"Mr. Moretti, I sometimes even think of you as a philosopher," Angelica said with a sigh upon hearing Klein's reply.

"In my circle of friends, the term 'philosopher' is used to scold somebody." Klein was in a good mood.

With that said, he bowed, wore his hat, and left after bidding farewell.

Although Angelica was unaware of the gentleman's name or identity, Klein was in no way depressed. What he learned was sufficient enough for him to engage in the next phase of his plan.

...

36 Zouteland Street. Inside Blackthorn Security Company.

Dunn looked at the portrait in his hands with his deep gray eyes.

"You wish to carry out a search for this person?"

"Yes." Klein had long prepared a reason for this. "Captain, didn't I mention that I would head to the Divination Club to observe the reactions of its members on Hanass Vincent's sudden death? I didn't

discover anything yesterday, but I accidentally found out today that the person in the portrait had appeared with Hanass Vincent once and was secretly discussing something with him. I flipped through our team's investigation report just now, but I didn't discover any person resembling him in the report."

There were no loopholes in his description. Even if Dunn Smith were to take this portrait to the Divination Club, he would get the same answer from Angelica.

Dunn cast his gaze away from the portrait and laughed.

"From the looks of it, the compensation funds weren't a waste."

...Captain, isn't your memory bad? Why would you mention the compensation at this point in time... Klein maintained a smile and didn't say a word.

"Was this drawn by you?" Dunn asked in passing.

"Yes. I drew it with the help of ritualistic magic," Klein replied, completely honest.

Of course, speaking the truth and revealing the whole truth were two different matters.

Dunn nodded slightly and said, "Get Old Neil to make a few more sets. I'll get Kenley and Royale to investigate and seek the cooperation of the police department. If this clue is of any use, you would've contributed greatly once again."

"May Goddess bless us." Klein tapped four spots on his chest as he appeared abnormally devout.

For him, all he needed from Dunn and company was to figure out the name and identity of the man in the portrait. He could divine his location above the gray fog!

...

Despite it being his day off, Klein didn't immediately return home after leaving the Blackthorn Security Company. Instead, he took the public carriage to the harbor and arrived in front of the Evil Dragon Bar's entrance.

In his considerations, although a Seer lacked the means to directly engage in combat with an enemy or the means to cast spells quickly, combat could be classified in many ways. Not all battles were chance encounters. As long as he had sufficient time to prepare, a Seer could similarly deal with an enemy using ritualistic magic. It was exactly how he resolved the magic mirror divination incident at Selena's house.

And this also meant that it was best if a Seer brought along the essential oils, herbs, and tiny candles to avoid being in a situation where they were unavailable when they were needed most, thus, resulting in a helpless death. After all, not everyone was like Selena who had an entire assortment of mysticism items which could be used.

As for the ones he applied for, as Klein had practiced frequently, he had used up most of them. He kept what was left in his tiny inner pocket.

He patted the cash note in his pocket and pushed open Evil Dragon Bar's door and strode in.

It was noon and there weren't many customers in the bar. Nor were there any rat-baiting or boxing matches. It was quiet and not lively enough.

Klein observed the guests drinking beer and playing cards as he walked toward the billiard room that led to the underground market.

At that moment, he saw a muscular old man walk out with a torn Admiral's jacket draped over his shoulders.

"Were you the friend Old Neil brought last time?" Reeking with the smell of alcohol, the blue-eyed, messy brown-haired elder sized up Klein and laughed.

Klein guessed at his identity and took off his hat and bowed.

“Yes, how might I address you?”

“Old Neil often mentions you. I’m the boss here, Swain.” The blue-eyed elder’s arms were thick and brawny. He had firm muscles and had the bearing of a military officer.

Former Tingen Mandated Punisher Captain... Rumor has it that he was once part of the Imperial Navy... Klein replied politely, “Yes.” “If you’re in need of money, feel free to approach me.” Swain laughed as he mentioned before walking towards the bar counter.

At that moment, Klein’s heart stirred as he immediately shouted, “Wait a moment, Mr. Swain. I have something I would like to ask of you.”

Swain halted in his steps, turned halfway around, and said with a chuckle, “You look, well—very similar.”

No, I’m not having memory issues... The corner of Klein’s lips twitched as he pointed at the portrait he drew and asked, “Have you met this gentleman before?”

He suddenly realized that Selena had likely been brought by Hanass Vincent to the underground market. This resulted in Elizabeth’s knowledge of the Evil Dragon Bar as well. Then, could the man in the portrait who had some relationship with Hanass Vincent have come here before?

Swain took a careful look and replied affirmatively, “I remember him. He had asked me if I had documents or items related to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range.”

Documents and items related to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range? Klein was taken aback as he suddenly connected that to another matter.

Back when he was borrowing the journal issue related to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range at Deweyville Library, the librarian had casually mentioned that someone had just returned it. Therefore, he still remembered very cleverly and didn’t need to flip through his name cards to determine if the man existed.

Could the gentleman who borrowed the journal issue before me be the one in the portrait?

The gentleman that had witnessed the exchange of the Antigonus family’s notebook.

The more Klein thought about it, the more likely it seemed. Otherwise, who would have borrowed those random journal issues for no reason?

Yes, research regarding the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range is quite an unpopular field. Other than the corresponding lecturers and associate professors, the common hobbyist would've never heard of it. Even the original Klein, who was a history graduate, only knew about it from the Antigonus family's notebook... Although Tingen is a city of universities, there wouldn't be that many people who would interested in the topic. And even if there is anyone interested, most of them would remain within the university's compounds. There would be no need to borrow the book from the Deweyville Library.

The most important point is that the book happened to be borrowed only recently...

By analyzing it this way, there really is a problem. I wasn't sharp enough and failed to realize it... Sigh, it looks like I have no talent at being a detective or acting like Sherlock Holmes...

While these thoughts raced through his mind, the boss of Evil Dragon Bar, Swain asked in puzzlement, "Is there a problem?"

Since there were customers and bartenders around, he could only ask indirectly.

"Nothing at all. I'm just wondering how I can investigate this gentleman. As you know, Hanass Vincent died at his home." Klein had long prepared his excuse.

He didn't want to make the Mandated Punishers become interested in the ancient relics from the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range.

"Vincent was one of the rather famous fortune-tellers in Tingen City. He often came here." Swain had indeed given a perfunctory answer, but as he recalled, he said, "Now that I think about it, the gentleman in the portrait did come together with Vincent at the very beginning..."

"That is exactly what I wanted to know. Do you remember his name?" Klein pressed immediately.

Swain shook his head and chuckled.

"I won't ask for my customers' names or identities unless I knew them to begin with, like Old Neil."

"Alright then." Klein deliberately revealed a saddened look.

To him, it didn't matter if Swain knew, because he could check the Deweyville Library.

To borrow books from a privately-funded library, he had to leave personal information, and his identification must have had sufficient credibility!

After all, Klein had relied on an introduction letter from a Senior Associate Professor before he obtained a library card.

Even if the gentleman had forged his information, it is very likely that he left some clues which can be helpful to my divination...

Klein watched Swain as he returned to the bar counter before entering the billiard room in deep thought.

He wasn't in a hurry to head to the Deweyville Library for his investigations. He planned on completing his purchases first. After all, it was unknown if he would encounter danger and be required to use ritualistic magic for subsequent developments.

After passing through a few rooms, Klein arrived at the underground market. There were a few stalls and customers, a clear indication that it wasn't peak hour yet.

Just as he took a step forward, he suddenly saw the monster, Ademisaul, who could smell the scent of death, standing in a corner.

The young man was pale, and his eyes gave off a hint of terror and madness. He had also noticed Klein as he looked over.

As they made eye contact, Ademisaul suddenly extended his hands to cover his face. He moved toward the corner of the wall in a panicked state.

Soon, he moved to a side door beside him and staggered as he ran out.

Is that necessary? I just nearly blinded you the last time... But I didn't do anything... Seriously, it's as if I'm the devil. Klein's facial expression was somewhat stiff.

He shook his head and smiled. He stopped thinking about the monster and came to a stall. He started shopping with a goal in mind.

After about half an hour, Klein spent a few pounds which was most of his secret stash of money.

He counted the three pounds and seventeen soli he had left, and he felt his heart ache. However, he touched the small metal bottle in the inner pocket of his black trench coat.

"This is the Amantha extract, which Madam Daly used previously.

"This is powder mixed with drago tree bark and leaves.

"Essential oil which is extracted from slumber flowers.

"Dried chamomile petals.

"This is Holy Night Powder which I previously produced myself."

...

Klein recalled the items stored in every tiny pocket of his and repeated them. He did it to prevent himself from failing to find the ingredient that he would need at a crucial moment.

Relying on his unique traits in mysticism, he quickly finished memorizing them and walked toward the door.

Suddenly, he saw a somewhat familiar figure in the corner of his eyes.

It was a young lady in a casual green dress. Her smooth black hair was soft and glistening. She had a round face with long eyes. They gave her a sweet look and a refined bearing.

It's the girl who was shivering strangely on the public carriage? She does seem fine... I never expected her to be a mysticism enthusiast... Klein slowed down and thought for a few seconds before finally recalling who she was.

He had to admit that, other than Justice who he had never seen clearly, the young lady was the most beautiful girl he had seen ever since he transmigrated into this world.

The sweet and refined girl stood before a stall that sold mysticism books and, in a breach of etiquette, kneeled to rub her fingers against an ancient book.

The ancient book was bound with a black hardcover. The book cover had the words "Book of Witches" in Hermes.

"It records the black magic of witches. Although I haven't dared to try them, someone I know did, and it really worked." The vendor seized the opportunity to promote the book.

The beautiful lady thought and asked, "In your mind, what does a witch look like?"

"A witch? A wicked person who brings calamities, disease, and pain," the vendor answered after some thought.

Klein didn't hear their conversation because he had already quickly walked out the front entrance. He was rushing to the Deweyville Library in a hurry to settle everything before returning home to cook dinner for his brother and sister. Tomato Oxtail Soup was on the menu.

...

Backlund. Crown Turf Club.

Audrey Hall wore a long white dress with engageantes and ruffled edges, as well as lace around her chest. She stood in a VIP room and watched the horses gallop.

She wore a veiled hat decorated with blue ribbons and silk flowers, and a pair of light colored fishnet gloves. Her cold and distant gaze seemed out of place in the bustling venue.

Just as the racehorse breasted the tape, her friend Viscount Glaint came closer and said with a suppressed voice, “Audrey, every time I see you, you look beautiful from a different angle.”

“How can I help you?” In the past, Audrey might have basked in the young man’s compliment, but now she could see Glaint’s ulterior motives through his speech and attitude.

Due to the early passing of Glaint’s father, he had inherited his title of nobility at the age of twenty. He was a slightly skinny young man. He looked to the left and right, then chuckled softly as he said, “Audrey, I know a real Beyonder, a Beyonder that doesn’t belong to the royal family.”

You’ve disappointed me every time you said that... Audrey looked forward and replied elegantly, “Really?”

“I swear on my father’s name. I have seen his Beyonder powers,” Glaint replied with whisper.

Audrey was no longer the same as before in which should be excited over the news. She was now a Beyonder, but to prevent Glaint from turning suspicious, she widened her eyes and faked a surprised smile. She asked with her voice trembling, “When can I see him?”

Yes, it’d be great to meet other Beyonders. I can’t just solve every triviality through the Tarot Club... Besides, I must gather my own resources to exchange them with Mr. Fool and Mr. Hanged Man... Not everything can be solved with money... Sigh, now that I’ve sent out the thousand pounds, I’ll have to be more frugal...

Glaint was very satisfied with Audrey’s response. He looked towards the racecourse and said, “Tomorrow afternoon, there will be a literature and music salon at my place.”

...

Inside Deweyville Library.

Klein took out his identity card and badge from his pocket and showed them to the few librarians.

“I am a probationary inspector from the Special Operations Department of the Awwa County Police. I need your cooperation in an investigation,” he said in a deep voice, recalling the police films that he used to watch.

The librarians looked at the identity card and badge before exchanging looks and nodding at each other.

“Go ahead and ask, Officer.”

Klein recited the names of the journals like New Archeology and upon finishing, he said, “I want the borrowing records of the journal for the last two months.”

He realized that one of the librarians had attended to him before, but it was obvious that the man didn’t recognize him.

“Alright. Hold on a second.” The librarians started searching and quickly found the recent borrowing records.

Klein flipped through the records seriously, looking for the man who had borrowed the same journal as he did.

There weren't many names since there was only one. He had borrowed the journal several times, including the issue that Klein knew of. The earliest entry was at the end of May, and the most recent one was last Saturday, a day before Hanass Vincent's death.

Klein ran his finger over the borrower's information and memorized it.

Sirius Arapis, cloth merchant, residing at 19 Howes Street...

He resides at 19 Howes Street?

Whilst memorizing the information, Klein keenly noticed a piece of information.

Yes, Welch stayed on Howes Street. The Divination Club is on Howes Street. This cloth merchant named Sirius Arapis also lives on Howes Street... From the looks of it, it's nothing strange for Welch to know Hanass Vincent either. They might have even gotten to know each through Sirius Arapis...

Suddenly, Klein felt that he had linked the clues together as his thoughts turned clear.

He was originally confused as to how Welch would be acquainted with Hanass Vincent since this son of a banker wasn't particularly interested in mysticism. To him, money was more important than divinations. But now, Klein felt that he had an inkling as to how they became acquainted.

According to the descriptions of several magazines, middle-class and wealthy residents would gladly pay a visit to their neighbors from the same social class in order to form a social circle which is beneficial to them. Similarly, Welch and the cloth merchant, Sirius, absolutely have the motivation and opportunity to become friends since they both lived in the Howes Street vicinity...

It isn't hard to understand how Sirius knew Hanass Vincent, who regularly went to the Divination Club on Howes Street. Perhaps it was a coincidental meeting, or perhaps Hanass had helped him out before. Regardless, this made it possible for the two of them, who frequently ran into each other within the same area, to become closer to one another....

Hanass Vincent wanted to sell his ancient books, and thus, Sirius introduced him to Welch, who was an undergraduate of the History department...

In Hanass' dream, there was the figure of the suspected evil god, the "True Creator." He also knew of the proper incantation format. This proves that he was very deep into the realm of mysticism. The possibility that he might have even been a member of some secret organization cannot be dismissed.

I cannot rule out the possibility of him joining some secret organization under Sirius's influence.

...

With ideas coming to him so easily, Klein could tell that the information the man had left behind had a certain level of credibility without even using divination methods.

Even if he isn't called Sirius Arapis, nor work as a cloth merchant, and doesn't live at 19 Howes Street, he definitely resides at Howes Street or, at the very least, somewhere nearby!

While these ideas ran through his mind, Klein viewed the borrowing records once again with this new train of thought.

The last time he came to Deweyville Library was last Saturday, a day before Selena's birthday party, which was also a day before Hanass Vincent died. Several days have already passed since then, but he hasn't returned the issues that he borrowed.

According to past records, if he only borrowed two issues, he would usually return them the next day.

Could this mean that he knows of Hanass' death and was scared to the point that he no longer dares to come to the Deweyville Library again?

Yes, he started by borrowing several unrelated history books and journals until he narrowed down what he needed, which is very similar to what I had read...

This means that there was no one teaching him. There was no Senior Associate Professor from the history department of a university. He did this completely through trial and error.

What would a shocked target do? Two choices. One, if he had all the necessary information, he would head straight to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range. Two, if he still lacks information, he

would lay low and observe the situation. He would only show himself again if he's certain that Hanass' death wouldn't implicate him.

Having made this conclusion, Klein closed the borrowing records and returned them to the librarians. He then took out the portrait and asked if anyone had seen the man. Unfortunately, many people came to borrow books every day, and the librarians didn't have any impression of the average person.

"Alright, thank you for your time." Klein put away his identification documents and his badge.

He had no intention of continuing the investigation alone. This wasn't only dangerous, but also troublesome. He planned to head to Zouteland Street once again and hand the case over to Captain and his teammates. He then planned to go home and prepare his Tomato Oxtail Soup for his siblings before heading to the world above the gray fog to divine the target's whereabouts and condition.

"Officer, is there anything else?" a librarian asked sincerely as he heaved a sigh of relief.

Klein nodded slightly and answered, "No, I will come back if there are new clues."

He held his black cane with his left hand and made his way to the door.

At this moment, he saw a man enter the library with his head hung low. He was dressed in a double-breasted coat, its collars standing tall.

When they walked past each other, Klein caught a glance of his thick, messy brows, and his pair of grayish-blue eyes!

These were things the tall collar couldn't hide!

Sirius? Sirius Arapis? A coincidence? Klein froze. He didn't expect to meet his target here!

What kind of luck was this!

Wasn't this too much of a coincidence?

He evaluated his physical condition and felt his aching sore muscles. Thus, he acted as though nothing had happened and continued walking towards the door.

Well, we have to follow what our heart tells us! Safety matters!

It doesn't matter if I missed this opportunity as long as Sirius is still in Tingen!

At this moment, the man in the double-breasted coat arrived before the counter and was handing the journals to one of the librarians.

"It's a return," he said with a soft, muffled tone.

The librarian received the journals causally and when he saw it, he suddenly froze.

He subconsciously looked up and differently as his body couldn't help but tremble.

"Is there a problem?" the man asked in a deep voice.

His question seemed like a spark that ignited a fuse, causing the librarian to instantly lose his self-control. He sprinted to the side and shouted,

"Officer!"

"The criminal is here!"

At this moment, Klein, who hadn't left the building, cursed madly in his heart.

He instinctively reached for his holster with his right hand and drew his revolver.

That man froze for a moment before turning and breaking into a sprint.

But he didn't head for the door. Instead, he escaped in the direction of the oriel window to the side, as if he wanted to smash through the glass and jump out onto the street.

Klein, who was flustered, turned his head to see the scene when he felt a sudden calm.

He realized that even though he was afraid of the target, his target was more afraid of him!

The man must be unable to determine my abilities in such an abrupt meeting. He isn't clear on what I am adept in, and so, he will instinctively avoid a direct confrontation and look for other ways to escape! Confident of his analysis, Klein lifted his revolver and pulled the trigger.

At that moment, the man in the double-breasted coat abruptly rolled onto the ground in an attempt to avoid the bullet.

Following up on that, he pressed down on the ground with his right hand and propelled himself into the air towards the oriel window.

Click! Klein's first shot was empty.

But this was something he had expected. He took advantage of Sirius's inability to dodge while in midair to aim at his torso and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The silver demon hunting bullets tore through the air and penetrated straight through Sirius's back.

Crash! The glass shattered and Sirius flew out the window, leaving drops of crimson blood on the crystalline glass fragments and windowsill.

Klein was no longer afraid now that the target was injured. He ran over and jumped out the window with the help of a chair.

This was the area lining the back of Deweyville Library's ground floor. A row of trees isolated a lush green field.

The injured Sirius was running to the side, in an attempt to enter a small alley between two buildings. Having not practiced shooting at moving targets, Klein didn't dare to fire blindly. He could only carry his cane in one hand and his gun in the other as he pursued the man in a black coat.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

He followed the trail of blood on the floor and tried to close the distance.

With a corner coming up, the injured Sirius's speed became slower and slower. Klein, who had been waiting for an opportunity to capture him, suddenly felt a little afraid. He felt as though the man in front of him wasn't human, but a wolf or a tiger, one that harbored terrifying dangers.

This was an instinct he had as a Seer, and also a warning given to him by his spirituality!

Klein immediately slowed down, his eyes scanning the blood on the ground.

Compared to the blood he had seen earlier, Sirius's blood was now black!

At this moment, a violent wind overwhelmed him. Sirius's face was reflected in Klein's eyes.

Thick, messy brows. Grayish blue eyes. Multiple protruding warts. An open mouth with two rows of white teeth.

Sirius was launching a counterattack at this moment!

This made the face reflected in Klein's eyes more visible. He could even smell a particularly putrid stench!

Sirius pounced a distance of seven or eight meters, far more than any normal human being could jump. But as Klein had stopped chasing him just in time, there was still a distance of nearly ten meters between them.

When the distance was shortened to two meters, the sticky saliva caused by drool and the disgusting dense warts formed a harrowing scene that made Klein's nerves tense up.

Without thinking, he seized the opportunity of the temporary immobility caused by Sirius's pounce to raise his right hand. He fired without stopping, allowing the bullets to rain down on the target's head.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Shooting from such a close distance allowed the silver demon hunting bullets to drill through Sirius's head. Blood splattered everywhere as his face became more and more mangled, until he staggered backwards.

Klein had emptied the bullets in his revolver in an instant. He subconsciously wanted to take a few steps back in order to confirm the results of this battle.

But at this moment, Sirius gave Klein the shock of his life by trying his hardest to stand up straight. Klein abruptly lifted the cane in his left hand.

Smack! The sturdy silver-inlaid black cane struck Sirius's neck, leaving a dark red mark.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

Klein acted on instinct, raining blows on his opponent until Sirius collapsed stumbling onto the ground.

Huff! Puff! Huff! Klein supported himself with his cane and took deep breaths. His eyes were trained intently on his target, afraid that Sirius would suddenly jump back to life.

At that moment, Sirius' head had basically been smashed into a pulp, and the warts gradually receded. His body stopped moving after a few convulsions.

Klein was in no hurry to examine the corpse. Instead, he tossed his cane to the side and took out the demon hunting bullets he had on him and reloaded his revolver.

After doing this, he collected himself and fought back his disgust, kneeling down to search the pockets of Sirius's doublebreasted coat.

One pocket, two pockets, three pockets... Klein soon found a bloodstained wallet, a Deweyville Library card, two pairs of brass keys, an unstuffed smoking pipe, a sheathed dagger, and a few letters that were folded neatly.

Laying everything onto the ground except for the letters, he stood up straight and looked at the wallet. He confirmed that there were only ten plus soli and some copper pennies.

The craftsmanship of the wallet is quite exquisite. It's such a pity... Klein sighed, feeling a little distracted.

If I didn't spend so much of my private stash of money, buying a wallet would've been on my schedule today.

After shaking his head, Klein opened the letters and quickly scanned through them.

"Dear Mr. Z,"

"Please allow me to defend myself. When Hanass and I sold off the Antigonus family's notebook, it wasn't stupidity or betrayal. It didn't appear special in any way when it was in our hands."

"I suspect that it's alive and that it's a wicked item armed with a certain life and wisdom. It was something dangerous that needed to be sealed."

"At different stages and before different people, it shows different contents!"

"This is a proven fact that I've learnt from the lamb in the police station."

"Although the notebook shows content that is sufficiently true each time with plenty of evidence, I believe that it would only reveal the completed content in the hands of a descendant of the Antigonus family."

"When Hanass and I received it, we could only see some trivial matters of the Antigonus family, the general situation of the Nation of the Evernight on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, and also the three Sequence potion formulas we handed in to you previously."

"As you know, the Secret Order has the Seer pathway in its grasp and possesses powerful tracking abilities, so Hanass and I believed that it would be a risky move to continue keeping the notebook. The value it had presented to us wasn't sufficient for us to take the risk."

"Since we couldn't wait for your reply, we agreed amongst ourselves to sell the notebook to Welch, who was living on the same street . He enjoyed collecting relics and ancient books, and he could afford to pay a high price for it. As for the subsequent developments, you are already aware of it."

"This is the first thing that I'd like to explain. As I am writing these words, Hanass is dead. He died due to a heart attack during his sleep. That must be a blessing from God, to prevent him from suffering the outcome of falling into the hands of heretics."

"I had no choice but to move to somewhere safer, more hidden. I didn't even dare to leave the house. Luckily, the lamb told me that the reason Hanass was being eyed by the heretics wasn't because of the Antigonus family's notebook, nor was his identity exposed. It was just that he had taken in a silly female disciple in the hopes of slowly developing her into one of us."

"His female disciple had stolen a glance at his secret incantation and tried the magic divination while a Nighthawk heretic was watching. I believe you can pretty much guess the rest of the story, so there is no need for me to describe it."

"It's a pity that the position of the lamb isn't high enough, so the actual details cannot be determined."

"From various feedback, it seems the heretics have yet to suspect me. Their investigations came to a halt due to Hanass' sudden death."

"Therefore, I will return to the streets and plan to borrow a few more journal issues from the Deweyville Library to seek out more clues."

"As a faction that also had the Seer pathway in its grasp, the Antigonus family must have had some divinations regarding its decimation. They must have left behind secret treasures that would allow for the revival of the family!"

"There's sufficient reason to believe that the treasure is hidden on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, which is in one of the relics in the Nation of the Evernight!"

Having read that, Klein's pupils constricted rapidly. He nearly dropped the letter.

The pathway that the Antigonus family had in its grasp was the Seer pathway?

What a coincidence!

...

Thunder seemed to boom in Klein's head again and again that left him in a daze. He felt as though it was destiny.

The notebook that led to the original Klein's death and indirectly helped me transmigrate, originated from the Antigonus family that has the Seer pathway in its grasp. The one that eventually made me choose the Seer potion was Emperor Roselle's diary, while Emperor Roselle was biased towards the Seer Sequence because of the mysterious Mr. Zaratul who was the leader of the Secret Order, which also has the Seer pathway in its grasp!

...This is like a suffocating net sewn by Fate.

What exactly is lurking behind all of this?

Klein held the letter and paced back and forth. He needed to verify the contents with other sources.

Yes, the Secret Order that the Zaratul family controls is pursuing and searching for the belongings left behind by the Antigonus family. If both parties shared the same Beyonder Sequence, there would be a sufficient reason and motive. Perhaps, it is to bridge any missing Sequences, obtain rare ingredients for a higher Sequence advancement, or covet the other party's accumulated experiences in avoiding the loss of control...

Going by this line of thought, it is rather reasonable that the Antigonus family has at least part of the Seer Sequence chain.

Yes, when I was divining for clues pertaining to the Clown potion, the images that emerged were mostly related to the Antigonus family. The only exception was the suited clown from the Secret Order... Therefore, the true meaning behind the symbolism is that each scene carries the possibility of obtaining the Clown potion and a clue. However, I didn't understand the crux of the issue and regrettably missed it.

With the two corroborating evidence, Klein nearly believed the matters that Sirius had brought up in the letter. He also understood why he constantly heard the word 'Hornacis' in the murmurs he shouldn't be hearing.

The earliest occurrence of this happening was when I first consumed the Seer potion!

He wore a serious expression as he thought to himself.

Meanwhile, he guessed that 'being a survivor of those that made contact with a relic of the Antigonus family' and 'becoming a Beyonder of the Seer pathway' were two necessary conditions to hear the murmurs saying 'Hornacis.'

Is there really a secret treasure buried within the ancient ruins on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range by the Antigonus family? No, I can't think about this! Just the notebook alone has

killed so many people. Any complete treasure would be even more terrifying! Klein shook his head subconsciously and cast his gaze onto the third piece of paper, which was the last of the letters.

"Honorable Mr. Z, I hope I can gain your assistance. I believe that you should be sufficiently interested in the treasure too."

"Until then, I will make myself look like a normal person, a normal lover of history."

"When the end of days arrives, I will offer all of Tingen's lambs as a sacrifice to God."

"Humbly, Sirius Arapis."

When he finished reading Sirius's letter, Klein had the urge to laugh.

Heh, why do I feel like I saved Tingen? What was this guy trying to do? Heretics are truly unbelievable...

Who is this Mr. Z? He seems like someone in a high position... At the very least, he should be at the same sequence as Captain.

Where was Sirius sending the letter to? He didn't write down the address... It seems like that's the cautiousness of a heretic. They wouldn't put the address on until the moment before they sent it out...

Right, if the Antigonus family had the potion of the Seer pathway in its grasp, then would the Clown potion be among the three formulas inside the Antigonus family's notebook that Sirius sent?" Highly likely!

In that instant, Klein seemed to have found clues to the Clown potion.

Although Sirius didn't bring the formula along with him, it was possible that he had left some form of record at his hideout. He must have also had it in his head, in his memories!

Klein looked at the corpse before him and considered the problem of making a dead person speak.

It required almost zero consideration, as an idea immediately popped into his head.

"Mediumship!"

Spirit Mediums could directly communicate with spirits that had yet to disperse. Seers, Mystery Pryers, and others could roughly accomplish the same thing using ritualistic magic.

Previously, when he was dealing with the corpse of the suited clown, there were three things that had kept Klein from using mediumship. Firstly, he was in a hurry to save the rest. Secondly, he didn't have the ingredients with him, and lastly, he lacked confidence. Thus, he didn't consider the option of mediumship and missed his best chance. When they returned to Blackthorn Security Company, the spirit was mostly gone. Even a Spirit Medium could only get superficial information.

But now, Klein happened to have all the ingredients and tools, and he happened to have the experience of communicating with lingering resentment through the help of dream divination.

My only concern about contacting the spirit of a heretic would be being placed in the same situation as Captain's entry into Hanass' dream where he saw a horrifying existence... However, Captain only remained frail for two days, and he wasn't considered severely injured. Yes, I could give it a try! He hesitated for less than twenty seconds before making a decision. He didn't want to miss out on this opportunity.

He raised his head, turned around, and cast his gaze toward the spot where the window had shattered. There was a crowd gathered there watching.

He took out his identification card and badge before returning to the broken window. He then told the onlookers through the shattered oriel window,

“I am a probationary inspector from the Special Operations Department of the Awwa County Police. I have shot the criminal to death. Please take this badge to the nearest police station and tell them to send backup to deal with the follow-up.”

“The rest are to help me cordon off this area. Do not allow anyone to come close for they might contaminate the scene.”

“Yes, Officer!” The librarian that caused Klein the trouble quickly took the badge.

When the entire scene was cordoned off and no one could enter the grass patch, Klein returned to the corner and stood by the side of the corpse.

He was glad that the innocent crowd couldn’t see the dead body, which looked more like a monster than a human. He put down his cane and revolver, then reached into the inner pocket of his trench coat to take out a metal bottle.

He was going to use the techniques of a mediumship ritual with dream divination to make the dead man speak!

Klein twisted open the golden bottle's cap and brought it to his nose. He took a whiff of the stimulating scent that energized him.

This was Holy Night Powder made using Slumber flowers, Dragon Blood grass, deep red sandalwood, mint, and other herbs. Since it was simple to concoct, Klein had made a batch the moment he got the ingredients from the underground market. It was going to be of use now.

He poured a little of the Holy Night Powder on his palm and collected himself. His irises turned dark.

Next, Klein put away the metal bottle and scattered the powder onto the ground after infusing his spirituality into it.

He scattered the powder as he walked, forming a circle around Sirius's corpse.

A formless barrier rose, separating them from the outside world.

Klein flicked away the remaining Holy Night Powder on his hand and took out the other metal bottles. He sprinkled the Amantha extract and other liquids in the surrounding area.

The ritual he set up was different from the one Old Neil used at Ray Bieber's house since the aim of the ritual was different.

For example, Old Neil poured the liquids before using the Holy Night Powder. That could create a serene and holy state second only to an actual altar. Klein had used the Holy Night Powder first before pouring the liquids to prevent Sirius's remnant spirituality from being disturbed by the surrounding objects while still barely managing to have an environment that satisfied the requirements of the ritual.

If he had used Old Neil's method, the rest of Sirius's spirituality would've been purged, making it impossible to establish a connection.

After finishing his preparations, Klein put away the materials and entered a state of Cogitation. He recited the Hermes incantations softly, "I pray for the power of the dark night.

"I pray for the power of the mystery.

"I pray for the Goddess' loving grace.

"I pray that you'll allow me to communicate with the heretic's spirituality inside this altar."

...

As the incantations reverberated throughout the sealed space, Klein suddenly felt a massive, terrifying, and mysterious energy descend upon him.

His eyes turned completely black as though he had lost his pupils and the whites of his eyes.

Seizing the opportunity, Klein recited a divination statement in his heart, "The formula to the Clown potion.

"The formula to the Clown potion."

...

As he was reciting the statement, he used Cogitation to temporarily enter a dreamlike state.

It was a hazy gray world without a sky or ground. Klein was unusually alert as he observed a transparent, ethereal figure.

He extended his right hand and touched the remnants of Sirius's spirit.

The scene in front of him changed with a rumble.

It was a study table painted with dark red paint. There were three candles on a silver candle stand, as well as a blank piece of paper.

Sirius had a pen in his hand. He wrote in Loen language, “This is the second formula, its name in the notebook is ‘Clown.’”

“80 milliliters of pure water, 5 drops of tornapple juice, 7 grams of black-rimmed sunflower powder, 10 grams of golden cloak grass powder, 3 drops of poison hemlock. These are the supplementary ingredients.”

“The main supernatural ingredients are: one crystal of the single horn of a matured Hornacis gray mountain goat and a complete stalk of a human-faced rose.”

Sirius seemed to have the Clown potion’s formula memorized as he quickly finished writing it.

He paused for a moment and took a sip of coffee, then he unwound the silver pendulum around his wrist.

He held the pendulum and closed his eyes, muttering terms to himself such as “the end of days”, “peace of mind”, “hope for the Lord’s blessings”, and “confess”.

After Sirius finished his prayer, Klein finally saw the pendulum clearly.

Under the wound silver chain was a thumb-sized human figurine.

The figurine had a single eye, a trait unique to giants. It was facing down, its legs bound by chains that connected upwards.

At that moment, the single eye of the giant suddenly had a faint red glow.

Crack!

The scene Klein witnessed shattered as his legs buckled, almost causing him to kneel to the ground.

Klein felt pain in his head as though he had been struck ruthlessly in the head with a bat. His vision turned blood-red as his hands involuntarily reached out to protect his knees.

He recovered several seconds later and stood back up. He felt that his spirituality was unusually weak, as if he had heard the murmurings that penetrated his mind once again.

But due to his progress in ‘digesting’ the magic medicine, the adverse reaction calmed down quickly.

The Hanged Giant, the True Creator... Sirius and Hanass were both members of the Aurora Order? But the Captain saw a huge cross in Hanass’ dream. The terrifying being crucified on the cross wasn’t the Aurora Order’s Hanged Giant... Klein took two deep breaths and waited for his spirituality to slowly recover.

The Aurora Order was a secret organization that sprang into existence about two to three hundred years ago. They worshiped the True Creator and symbolized him with The Hanged Giant. They believed that every human being had divine qualities, and as long as they persevered and made it through the countless trials, they would be able to accumulate enough divine qualities to become angels.

According to the internal records of the Nighthawks, the Sequence 9 of the Aurora Order was Secrets Suppliant. These Beyonders could sense the existence of mysterious and horrifying beings and were armed with a decent amount of knowledge regarding sacrifices and some knowledge on ritualistic magic. There was enough evidence to claim that senior Secrets Suppliants experienced distortions of their worldview and lost control easily.

Little was known about the Sequence 7 which the Aurora Order had grasped. Sequence 8 was Listener. This was considered quite a terrifying ‘job’ for a Beyonder.

Every Listener could listen directly to the whispers of the secret entities; thus, they frequently came into contact with powerful, distorted, unique abilities. But consequently, if they were unable to advance, it was difficult for them to survive the next five years after becoming a Listener. Furthermore, the comments the Nighthawks had in the reports were that every Listener was a lunatic. Even if they looked normal on the surface, they were always crazy on the inside.

The details of the report regarding the Aurora Order flashed through Klein's mind. His initial theory was that Sirius was a Secrets Suppliant.

From the description, Secrets Suppliant are as hopeless as Seers in battle. That does fit Sirius's actions just now. What happened later was a loss of control brought about by the injury? Yes, Frye once said that every Beyonder would more or less undergo some weird changes after they die... Klein thought as he tapped four points on his chest to praise the Goddess.

After his spirituality recovered slightly, he concluded the ritual with the appropriate procedure and dismantled the wall of spirituality.

With a whoosh, a gust of wind blew as Klein forced himself to look at Sirius's corpse.

He noticed that there was still an obvious wart on Sirius's mangled face. It was a dark purple wart, almost black. There seemed to be liquid and a light gleaming within.

"What kind of transformation was that?" Klein rubbed his temples, not daring to touch it.

He bent over and retrieved his cane, allowing it to bear his weight.

After what had just happened, he knew that Sirius's spirituality had been completely destroyed. Even the Spirit Medium Daly would be unable to communicate with him.

After a while, Klein saw Captain Dunn and his partners, Leonard and Kenley.

"It seems like your fate is tied to Beyonders and evil forces. In just a few weeks, you have come across more supernatural incidents than what we usually see in months," Leonard joked, looking at the corpse on the ground.

"It might not be a coincidence," Klein added, as he suddenly thought about the red chimney he had seen in his dream divination, as well as the majestic palace on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range and the formless focus on him. He took the opportunity to mention it in passing.

Dunn surveyed the surroundings and, with his gray eyes trained on Klein, asked, "You tried channeling his spirit?"

There were still traces of Holy Night Powder and the scent of the essential oils.

"Yes," Klein replied truthfully. "I was worried that you would arrive late and that the remains of his spirituality would scatter."

"You don't look well. Are you alright?" the short Kenley asked in concern.

Klein passed Sirius's undelivered letter to the captain and began from the beginning.

"When I went to the underground market to purchase materials for the rituals, I suddenly remembered that Selena had also once gone to the Evil Dragon Bar and that it was Hanass Vincent that brought her there. This meant that Hanass was a regular there. Thus, I suspected that the person in the portrait, someone who's definitely connected to Hanass, might have gone to the underground market too.

"I asked the boss Swain about the portrait, and he gave me confirmation. He told me that the man had once tried to buy documents and items related to the Hornacis Mountains. That reminded me of the library. I recalled that the librarian had mentioned that someone had just returned the journal issue I wanted to borrow..."

Leonard stood to the side, listening with a smile. He suddenly interrupted, "And so you brought your identification documents and badge here to flip through the borrowing records? Actually, I am very curious; why would you come into conflict with this man here? Even if it was a direct encounter, with your style of doing things, you would've pretended that you didn't know him and would just leave the library. Then you would come to Zouteland Street to ask for our help."

"Yes, there was no need for you to take the risk. As long as you confirm the target and that he hasn't left Tingen, there would always be a way to find him," Dunn added as he reviewed the letter.

Klein immediately said in embarrassment, “The librarian recognized him and shouted for the police to help.

“There’s no way I could have pretended not to hear that...” Leonard and Kenley looked at each other. One tried to cover his amusement, while the other turned his head to the side.

Dunn nodded, his gaze leaving the letters.

“Did you get anything from channeling his spirit?”

“I saw a pendulum that took the shape of a Hanged Giant. I saw a blood-red glow flash in the giant’s only eye before I was forced out of the ritual,” Klein described honestly.

He didn’t want to talk about the Clown potion for the time being as he had two considerations.

First, if Dunn and the rest were able to find Sirius’s hideout and the corresponding records, then it would make no difference if he told them or not, as there would be no additional contributions attributed to him.

Second, if Dunn and the rest were unable to find it, he could report it in the future. This way, he would be awarded with another contribution, allowing him to acquire the ingredients needed to concoct a potion. This was a way to obtain double the rewards for a single task, a technique that stemmed from Old Neil’s recent teachings.

“Aurora Order?” Dunn muttered to himself before he asked some relevant questions.

After Klein answered all his questions, he saw the fatigue in Klein’s eyes and waved his cane.

“Not bad. You foiled a scheme that was targeting Tingen. You can go back and rest. Kenley, bring Old Neil over.”

After giving out instructions, Dunn smiled bitterly and shook his head.

“Before Sequence 6, Beyonders of the Sleepless pathway lack many supplemental abilities. We can only conduct the simplest of ritualistic magic.”

“Captain, you mean that from Sequence 6 onwards, a Sleepless pathway Beyonder would gain improvements in the corresponding aspects?” Klein asked out of curiosity.

“Yes,” Dunn confirmed.

...

After leaving the Deweyville Library, Klein nearly fell asleep in the carriage on multiple occasions on his way back to Daffodil Street.

He lumbered into the house, he then removed his hat and jacket before falling asleep on the sofa.

Sometime later, he woke up abruptly, took out his pocket watch, and snapped it open.

“Melissa will be back in half an hour, Benson in forty-five minutes... If I don’t get up, I’ll have to make them wait an hour before we can have dinner...” Klein rubbed his forehead as he entered the kitchen.

He washed his face with cold water, then took out the oxtail, tomatoes, carrots, and onions he had bought that afternoon.

After he prepared the ingredients, he suddenly froze. He had the feeling that his actions just now formed a strange juxtaposition with the incident that afternoon.

“I am a man who just saved Tingen...” Klein mumbled in amusement. He put on a white apron and got to making dinner.

CHAPTER 106: ARTIST KLEIN

After eight in the evening, in the Moretti family's dining room.

As he looked at the shallow soup left in the bowl, Benson raised his hand to cover his mouth to give a satisfied burp.

"Although that was our third time eating it, I still find it delicious. The sourness and sweetness of the tomato and the chewy texture of the oxtail blends into a perfect and unique flavor. Klein, I'm sorry that the Blackthorn Security Company caused Tingen City to lose such an outstanding chef."

Melissa leaned backwards in her chair and nodded in agreement silently.

"This is because you have yet to try real cooking." Klein smiled humbly. "If we have a chance in the future, let's head to Bonaparte Restaurant on Howes Street for some authentic Intis cuisine, and also to Coastline Restaurant in the Golden Indus borough for some southern delicacies."

These were restaurants that were always covered in the newspapers, where the average cost per person was around a pound and a half.

"I like your cooking more," Melissa answered without hesitation. Benson chuckled and changed the

topic.

"But I ultimately feel that there's something lacking from the tomato oxtail soup. Perhaps, it shouldn't

be eaten with bread?" Klein nodded in agreement.

"It's best complemented with rice."

"Rice..." Melissa muttered with an expression of yearning.

Tingen, which was located north, wasn't considered a big city. Besides a few particular restaurants, it was difficult to have any chance of eating rice.

To Benson and Melissa, this kind of food only existed in the descriptions of newspapers and textbooks.

Looking at his sister's expression, Klein laughed.

"Wait till we save another six month's salary, and we will find a chance to go on vacation in Desi Bay and try the delicacies there."

Desi Bay was located in the far south of the Loen Kingdom, and a third of it belonged to Feynapotter Kingdom. It had plenty of sunlight and beautiful scenery, and the paella there was very famous.

Before Melissa could share her opinion on saving money, Klein said, "In another three months, I should get another raise. By then, we could totally fulfill our desire to travel as well as save money for necessities."

"Why?" Benson and Melissa's attention was redirected as expected.

Klein coughed lightly and smiled while explaining, "Due to my professionalism, the police department which always collaborates with our company intends to hire me as their parttime history consultant. They would pay me extra, at least two pounds a week. If you see me in a police uniform in the future and showing the corresponding police documentation, please don't be shocked.

"Of course, as you know, the work efficiency in governmental departments is as slow as a ninety-year-old lady's footsteps. They still have to go through a lengthy procedure, and they're required to do a thorough inspection of me. Hence, on my off days for the next two months, I'll be heading to Khoy University quite often to see my mentor and the teaching staff I know to learn more."

Seeing the shocked look in his brother and sister's eyes, he paused and said with a strange expression, "Just like Emperor Roselle said, 'One is never too old to learn.'"

Benson maintained a few seconds of silence before saying in a half self-deprecating and half emotional manner, "Is it too late for me to sign up for university? Knowledge really is wealth." *And also power...*

Klein added silently.

"Benson, you need Klein's grammar books and his classic literature textbooks," Melissa said out of the blue, stealing the words from Klein's mouth.

Benson's expression seemed to change. He gritted his teeth and said, "Klein, pass me those books tonight.

"Even if all they do is put me to sleep, I am determined to read them for an hour, no—an hour and a half a day.

"I swear in the name of the Goddess! If I can't do it, I will be a curly-haired baboon!"

A smile immediately plastered across Klein's face.

"No problem."

...

The next morning, Klein hung his coat and hat on the clothes rack in the break room. Then he followed Rozanne's instructions and walked to the basement to the duty room outside Chanis Gate.

Captain Dunn and members Frye, Seeka, Royale, Leonard, and Kenley were all there.

As his gray eyes glanced past the newly promoted Nighthawk, Dunn smiled and said, "We have a routine meeting every Thursday to summarize past missions and discuss various challenges."

I am a man who has endured the test of many regular meetings as well... Klein lampooned. He found a seat and joked, "Do I need to introduce myself?"

Dunn smiled and turned to look at Kenley.

"Briefly tell us about the investigation of Sirius Arapis."

Kenley was also a Nighthawk who had been promoted from a member of the civilian staff. He wasn't very tall, his brown hair was quite thick, his body size was average, his muscles were very toned, and he looked like someone who was smart and capable.

He thought and said, "With Old Neil's help, we found Sirius's secret hideout. There were many books and items at the scene. From them, we can be certain that Sirius was one of the underground members of the secret organization, the Aurora Order. He was also a Secrets Suppliant.

"There's sufficient evidence to show that he and Hanass Vincent sold the Antigonus family notebook to Welch. Those who don't remember Welch can ask Klein about him.

"We found valuable items, including three Sequence potion formulas, which are Sequence 9 Seer, Sequence 9 Apprentice, and Sequence 8 Clown...

"The subsequent task is to use Sirius's social circle and the letters we found to locate other outer circle members of the Aurora Order. The focus of our search will be directed at the heretic who has infiltrated the police department.

“Also, people who were in contact with Hanass need to be reinvestigated.”

Dunn nodded lightly and looked towards Klein.

“As you heard just now, we’ve obtained the Clown potion formula, but are unable to determine if it’s real. We have to wait for the Holy Cathedral to give us feedback.

“In the mission relating to the Aurora Order, you have made a crucial contribution. Plus, given that you shot a member of the Secret Order, it won’t be long until you accrue enough contributions to be promoted. But, I have to remind you that not everyone is like Daly. You have to suppress your desire and wait for three years. In order to avoid losing control, you can’t allow your mindset to be affected by our discovery of the Clown potion formula.”

Captain, you don’t understand how magical it is to ‘act’... I have already confirmed the authenticity of the Clown potion formula using divination above the gray fog last night... Klein nodded obediently.

“I will keep my emotions in check.”

Then Seeka Tron, the quiet Midnight Poet with white hair and black eyes, said, “We still haven’t found any clues regarding Instigator Tris. I suspect that he has already fled from Tingen.”

...

After they were done exchanging their new information, Klein left the duty room and found Old Neil to continue his mysticism lessons. In the afternoon, he went over to his combat teacher, Gawain, to do basic strength, endurance, and overall coordination training.

...

With the sun still up and bright at five.

Klein took off his training costume, took a quick shower, and changed into his original clothing. He then took the public carriage to Besik Street.

He hadn’t forgotten about the red chimney that he had seen in his dream divination, nor did he forget about the man that he suspected to be a member of the Psychology Alchemists who had bought supplementary ingredients for the Spectator potion in the underground market. These things would be inconvenient to investigate in his role as a Nighthawk.

“Number 27. Henry’s Private Detective Company... Yup, it’s here.” Klein found a private detective company according to the newspaper’s descriptions. It was said to be trustworthy.

He put on a mask, lowered his top hat, and flipped up his collar. He walked up the stairs and came to the company on the second floor.

Knock! Knock! Knock! He knocked on the door that was halfclosed.

“Please come in,” said a voice that seemed to be affected by phlegm.

Klein lifted his cane and pushed the door to enter. He saw the detective company using an almost open layout. There were four employees sitting at their respective seats partitioned into small cubicles.

“Hi, I’m Detective Henry. How may I help you?” a man in a white shirt and black vest greeted him.

He held a smoking pipe in his hand, and he had a prominent jawline, blade-like eyebrows, and dark blue eyes that sized up his client.

Klein used the collar of his trench coat to block half of his face as he spoke.

“I have two matters to entrust to you. How are your rates?”

“That depends on the difficulty of the task.” Detective Henry retracted his gaze and pointed towards the sofa in the guest area. “Let’s talk over there.”

Klein followed him to the semi-partitioned area and sat on the single-seat sofa. He didn't take off his coat, nor did he take off his hat and mask.

He purposely made his voice hoarse and said, "First, I need you to help me find a house with a chimney that looks like this, as well as information on who the owner and current tenant are."

As he spoke, he took out a neatly folded paper. When he opened it, there was a chimney with its color noted down and its surrounding scenery.

This was the drawing that Klein completed by using the uniqueness of the area above the gray fog and the method of praying to himself.

"What a great drawing..." Detective Henry complimented subconsciously. He then knitted his eyebrows and said, "This is not complicated but very tedious. It would require a long time and a large amount of manpower."

"I understand." Klein nodded lightly.

Detective Henry pondered for a moment and said, "Seven pounds. The price for this job would be seven pounds. In addition, you have to give me at least two weeks."

"Alright. Second, help me find this gentleman and find out his identity. The only thing I know is that he occasionally appears at the Evil Dragon Bar near the harbor borough. And he must not detect any men you send. He is very sensitive and he has terrifying observational skills." Klein took out the second portrait.

He intended to get in touch with a member of the Psychology Alchemists to see if he could find any valuable information and materials. For example, perhaps a formula that could be exchanged with Justice?

"Three pounds, such a mission would cost about three or four pounds. Your outstanding drawing skills will help my assistant and I save time," Detective Henry replied skillfully.

"Ten pounds in total?" Klein found the price upsetting.

Detective Henry took a puff on his pipe and said, "Yes, and you need to put a deposit of two pounds. When there's progress, you'll need to pay another three to five pounds. The rest of the payment can be made when the mission is completed."

"Then I shall come next week to check on your progress." Klein didn't haggle over the price to prevent the observant detective from remembering any of his characteristics.

After they signed a standard contract, he took out two one-pound notes and passed them to the detective. He only had one pound and seventeen soli left from his savings.

As Detective Henry watched the man wearing a gauze mask and a black trench coat with its collar raised leave in a hurry, he had a suspicious look in his eyes as he smoked his pipe.

Why is he looking for a house that has that kind of chimney?

He must be an artist, or at least a professional sketch artist of some sort...

...

In the afternoon, in Viscount Glaint's luxurious mansion.

Audrey, with her maidservant in tow, followed etiquette and passed her hand to the host. She looked at him giving her hand a quick peck.

"Your beauty accentuates my salon," Glaint first gave a compliment as usual. Then, he lowered his voice and said, "That lady is already here. She's a Beyonder and also an author."

"Author?" Audrey asked casually as she observed Glaint's reaction.

Subsequently, she didn't have to mind the presence of her maidservant, Annie, since they chatted about ordinary topics.

Glaint straightened his body and chuckled.

"Yes, I believe that you have read her works in the past. She wrote the book, Stormwind Mountain Villa, which was highly acclaimed for the past two months."

"I enjoyed that book, especially the calm Lady Sissi," Audrey replied with a faint smile.

Meanwhile, she was rolling her eyes at her own hypocrisy inwardly.

That was because her latest hobby had nothing to do with novels. She had stopped reading Stormwind Mountain Villa a month ago, her progress stopped at the one-third mark.

Ever since she joined the Tarot Club and acquainted herself with the powerful Fool, and became a real Beyonder, she had been immersing herself in mysticism knowledge. She had been systematically learning about psychology and had lost interest in other activities.

Smiling, Glaint guided Audrey to a sofa in the hall.

"I am sure that Miss Fors Wall will leave a good impression on you, for she is just like Stormwind Mountain Villa's Lady Sissi— calm, intellectual, and lazy.

"Also, my dear Miss Audrey, are you going to play the piano for us later? That is the greatest compliment for a novel and

literature."

Audrey looked at the side profile of Glaint's face. His expression, tone, and body language all conveyed his intention to flaunt himself.

He wants to use me to show off... Audrey thought to herself, as if she had just met this good friend of hers for the first time.

She maintained her elegant smile and said, "My music teacher, Mr. Vicanell the pianist, said that my standards have deteriorated recently and needs more practice."

"Alright." Glaint was just about wondering what to say when he suddenly saw a lady taking desserts from the long table. "Audrey, this is Miss Fors Wall, the author of Stormwind Mountain Villa."

Audrey looked over. Miss Fors Wall was about 23 years old and 1.65 meters in height. She was wearing a pale yellow dress with frills. Her brown hair was slightly curly. She looked over with her pale blue eyes as Glaint introduced her while wearing a smile that appeared ruminative.

Audrey had noticed several small details in the less than three seconds of observation.

There are faint traces of yellow on Miss Fors's fingers... She likes cigarettes...

There are obvious calluses on her fingers at spots used to hold a pen, fitting her identity as an author...

Her arm movements show that she has decent strength. This is not a quality expected of an author, unless she is passionate about exercising. Perhaps she was born like this, or she might have engaged in some other occupation in the past...

She displayed her calm, rational, and precise style in Stormwind Mountain Villa. This must be linked to her previous occupation...

Her eyes and emotions are relaxed, giving me the feeling that she is looking down on me and Glaint. Is this the psychological superiority a Beyonder has over an ordinary human?

If it was a coincidence that Glaint discovered her identity as a Beyonder, then she should feel some anxiety and uneasiness. After all, she is unable to guess his reaction and what he would do next since the unknown always brings about fear.

This indicates that she was the one who voluntarily approached Glaint, having learned about our hobbies. She must be quite confident about what is going to happen next...

Why would a Beyonder approach Glaint? Does she need monetary support, or the Beyonder ingredients stored in the treasury? Or perhaps she needs help with something...

At this moment, Glaint was introducing Audrey to Fors.

"Madam, this is the Miss Audrey that I mentioned previously, the most dazzling jewel in all of Backlund. Her father is Earl Hall, a trusted aide of His Majesty and respected member of the cabinet.

"Good afternoon, Madam Fors. Stormwind Mountain Villa is still seated by my bed to this very day." Audrey adhered to the rules of the aristocracy and curtsied.

But she added silently, *That's because I haven't finished reading it even after a month...*

Fors returned the niceties simply and said, "Good afternoon Miss Audrey, your beauty sure leaves an impression. I think that I already have an idea for my next novel. Heh, Viscount Glaint said that you have exceptional talents in music."

They merely exchanged praises as they were in public.

After watching Fors continue towards the dining table as she targeted a cream cake, Audrey retracted her gaze and headed to the living room with Glaint.

She recalled the details she had seen just now and tried to figure the motives of the woman. She wanted to gain some advantage in future conversations.

As she took a step forward, Audrey, who was as calm as an objective Spectator, stepped on her dress and nearly fell.

At this moment, her personal maidservant, Annie, caught her, allowing her to maintain her grace.

"Miss, the unique design of this dress means that you cannot walk too quickly," Annie pulled close to Audrey's ear and reminded her softly.

"I know." Audrey nodded in reply, her face flushed red.

I was too absorbed in observing others that I forgot to look at where I was placing my foot... she silently complained in resentment.

Audrey met with many other esteemed authors, critics, and musicians for the rest of the salon, always maintaining her sweet, elegant smile.

Finally, after her facial muscles began turning sore, she saw Viscount Glaint's signal.

She waited for a few minutes and gave the excuse of needing to use the washroom. She lifted her dress and stood up slowly to leave the salon.

After confirming that there was no one tailing her, she made her way to the study on the first level and told her maidservant Annie, "I have something to discuss with Glaint. Guard the door for me. Do not let anyone enter."

"Alright." Annie didn't feel that the request was strange, for she knew that Audrey and Viscount Glaint shared similar hobbies and would often discuss mysticism in a private setting.

Audrey entered the study and locked the door. She saw Glaint seated behind the desk while playing with a pen. Fors Wall was standing in front of the bookshelf, nonchalantly flipping through a book.

"I'll introduce you both again. Madam Fors, a true Beyonder." Glaint put down his pen and walked over.

“Is that so?” Audrey intentionally exaggerated her feelings of doubt.

Fors returned the book to its original position and turned around with a smile.

“It looks like I have to prove myself.”

She walked over to the door and extended her right palm, grabbing the handle of the door.

Suddenly, Audrey’s vision blurred. It was as if she witnessed Madam Fors turn incorporeal as she passed through the door.

She was shocked. Concentrating, she realized that Fors was no longer standing in her original position.

A few seconds later, the door handle turned. The locked door was opened just like that. Fors Wall smiled as she walked in from the outside. Audrey’s maid, Annie, who was not far away, didn’t seem to be aware of what had happened.

“What a magical ability!” Glaint exclaimed.

Audrey took in a deep breath and said, “I have no more doubts.” At the same time, the ability Fors had displayed allowed Audrey to confirm what her true motives were, since acquiring money or materials would be no trouble for a Beyonder like that.

Glaint doesn’t have any Beyonder guards... Fors wants to use the statuses and resources available to Glaint and I to achieve something? Audrey tried her hardest to act as a Spectator.

Fors chortled and said, “Let us interact with honesty. We do not have much time left.”

“I was once a doctor at a clinic and was given an opportunity to become a Beyonder. That was more than two years ago.”

“I hope that you can do something for me, and the reward I will give you is allow you to join the ranks of true Beyonders. I will sell you the formula of a particular Sequence potion and its corresponding materials.”

Upon hearing such a promise, Glaint could not help but ask, “What do you want us to do?”

“I have a partner who’s in jail now, awaiting the final verdict. I hope that you can save her, regardless of the methods used,” Fors said simply.

Audrey frowned.

“Madam Fors, the abilities you have demonstrated should be better suited for the task...”

Fors laughed and shook her head.

“No, that is not the case. She cannot pass through the places that I can. I can only go in regularly and chat with her.

“Also, I think that risking my life to save her is not a good idea. Life is short, but there is much for us to do.”

Audrey observed Fors’s face and body language. She considered her words before asking, “I understand. What crime is your partner being locked up for?”

Fors’s expression immediately turned a little awkward.

“My partner is a very respected person who can make others comply from the bottom of their hearts. She is of good character and kind. Well... Uh... It was that the means she used to convince a thug was a little over the top...”

...

After handing out the mission, Klein followed his original schedule of mysticism lessons in the morning and combat lessons in the afternoon. The regularity of his life almost made him forget that he

was a member of the Nighthawks. The ‘curse’ of often encountering supernatural incidents seemed to disappear as well.

It was Saturday, his turn to guard Chanis Gate.

“You can enjoy the coffee I left here or the black tea in the clerk’s office.” Dunn surveyed the room with his deep gray eyes.

Klein, who had already given an excuse to his siblings, nodded in joy.

“Alright Captain. You sure are a generous gentleman.” Dunn laughed.

“Those will help you relax. Being tense all the time is not good for your health.”

He took his hat and cane and walked toward the door.

As he was exiting the door, he suddenly turned around and said, “I forgot to remind you; do not open Chanis Gate no matter what you hear, unless it is opened from the inside.

“Remember, no matter what you hear, no matter what happens.”

Captain, that’s a little scary... Klein tensed up instantly. He felt the darkness of the basement triumph over the light of the gas lamp.

Despite not being dawn yet, the well-ventilated but quiet and dark underground was illuminated by gas lamps. The dim yellow light emitted from the gas lamps were protected by glass, allowing them to steadily shine throughout the empty and quiet tunnel.

Klein sat in the duty room and casually flipped through the newspapers, magazines, and books piled before him. He directed some of his attention outside, to prevent anyone from charging inside the Chanis Gate.

His trench coat and top hat were hung on the clothes rack near the entrance while his cane was leaning against the wall where it could be easily retrieved.

The rich aroma of coffee filled the air, and Klein couldn't help but take a whiff. He massaged his temples to fight against the heavy head feeling he was experiencing and the weariness of his body.

As a college student back on Earth, he often slept at five in the morning and woke up at noon. In the past two to three years of his working life, he often stayed up all night, to the point of being able to attend work energetically the next day. However, it was all thanks to the games that were too exhilarating, novels that were too interesting, television shows and movies that were too entertaining.

This world obviously didn't possess any of the necessities needed for staying up all night.

"Seriously, Emperor Roselle. If you want to posture, do it properly. Pour your limited life into an unlimited enterprise. Lead the people of this world into the information age!" Klein muttered silently. He could only console himself that there were at least newspapers, magazines, and increasingly interesting novels.

At first, he wanted to focus on his studies to restrain his sleepiness. However, practically speaking, it conflicted with his duty. Once he entered that state, he would easily overlook any movements outside and any changes to the situation at the Chanis Gate.

Phew. Klein picked up his coffee cup and carefully blew at it.

He took a sip and let the fragrant taste swish around his mouth before letting the liquid slowly flow down his throat.

"Fermo Coffee from the Paz Valley, very bitter but very refreshing," Klein gave a compliment and put down his coffee cup.

The Paz Valley was located in the Southern Continent, a region that produced high-quality coffee beans. It was currently being fought over by the Intis Republic and the Loen Kingdom. They both built colonist settlements on the left and right banks of the Paz Valley, and had destroyed the original Paz Kingdom.

In the eerie silence, Klein casually picked up a magazine and realized that it was Ladies Aesthetic, which talked about fashion and dating.

"This must be from Rozanne..." he murmured in amusement as he flipped through it with his interest piqued.

Maybe it was due to the sudden advancement of camera technology in the past decade or so, not only did the magazine use a lot of illustrations, it even used monochrome pictures as their content—just like the newspapers.

They fashionably invited the famous play and musical actors to model the charms and the magical pairing of the clothing. In a short span of seven years, the new regional Backlund magazine became a mainstream magazine that spread across the nation.

"The dress looks nice, she's pretty too..." Klein flipped through it casually and didn't hide his aesthetic inclinations.

He was a man that had matured normally both in body and mind. He had always appreciated beautiful ladies, but he had long set his goal—to find a way home. Hence, he tried his best to keep his distance from the opposite sex, so that he didn't waste the other person's time or leave behind any emotional baggage.

As for streetwalkers, he was quite a germaphobe in that aspect.

Benson and Melissa were already shackles that couldn't be removed. He could only find the means to make it up to them in the future... Klein suddenly felt his heart heavy and he couldn't help but let out a sigh.

The further he strayed away from home, the more he felt melancholic during quiet late nights.

He suddenly lost his interest in looking at beautiful women and put down the magazine in his hands. He picked up a novel instead.

"Stormwind Mountain Villa, author, Fors Wall," Klein read the content on the cover.

The tranquil night, dim yellow light, and the leatherbound book reminded him of his younger days when he rented books. Hence, he continued to read simply because of nostalgia.

Stormwind Mountain Villa was a novel about Lady Sissi, who was 1.65 meters tall and weighed ninety-eight pounds. It was a story of her embarking as a home tutor in the Fruys Mountain

Villa.

"One pound is about half a kilogram... Is this Jane Eyre of an alternate world?" Klein caressed his fingers against the smooth paper as he began making guesses of the subsequent content.

However, just as he thought it was a romance novel, an evil spirit emerged in the story. When he believed that it was a ghost story, Lady Sissi revealed herself as a detective and made a marvelous deduction.

Just as Klein felt that it was definitely a detective novel, the main male character took a heavy blow to the head and lost his memory. Then, it became a heart-rending drama.

"...In the end, it's still a romance book." Klein closed the book and drank a mouthful of coffee.

Thump!

Thump! Thump! Thump!

A ferocious knocking was suddenly heard as it reverberated in the dim and quiet empty corridor.

Klein jumped in shock as he immediately turned tense.

He instinctively drew his revolver from his underarm holster, adjusted the cylinder and hammer. Then, he slowly walked to the door and looked for the source of the sound.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The thumping became more and more intense. Klein looked in the direction of the sound and saw the black outward-swinging gates that were engraved with seven Sacred Emblems.

"Sounds from beyond the Chanis Gate?" He squinted his eyes and his heart was beating like a drum.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Klein saw Chanis Gate shake gently, and he sensed the massive impact it was withstanding.

"It can't be, right... I'm encountering something on my first day on duty? Did I get an unlucky constitution after I transmigrated?" Klein's right hand broke into cold sweat as it held the revolver.

Very soon, he recalled the Captain's instruction: do not open Chanis Gate no matter what you hear, unless it is opened from the inside.

Uh, could this be a normal phenomenon? Klein suddenly calmed down.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Thump! Thump! Thump! The commotion beyond the Chanis Gate grew in intensity, but the heavy black metal gates only shook. Otherwise, it didn't show any unusual signs.

"This is normal. I nearly died from the shock..." Klein muttered, before he prepared to return to the duty room.

Just then, he heard a sharp grinding noise. He looked at the heavy Chanis Gate bulging outwards as a crack appeared on in its surface!

Zing!

In the jarring noise, Klein's almost fixed eyes saw a figure. Its height was about the length of a man's arm, and it was wearing a classic, black, miniaturized regal gown. There was an obvious stain on the gown.

It had a not-so-exquisite face, black eyes, and tightly sealed lips.

It was a cloth puppet, a toy cloth puppet!

At that moment, when Klein was about to subconsciously raised his gun to take aim, the cloth puppet leaned heavily into the crack in Chanis Gate and unfurled the paper it was holding.

There were many symbols that represented concealment on the paper, some that Klein knew and some that he had yet to learn. Together, they formed a vertical eye!

Klein had yet to understand the situation when the regalgowned puppet was suddenly dragged back by a shapeless force to the back of Chanis Gate!

Creak!

Chanis Gate closed once again, with no more knocking or pounding sounds.

The basement regained its tranquility and silence as though nothing had happened.

"I have to inform Captain that Chanis Gate was opened from the inside... But it closed itself..." At that moment, Klein's mental facilities returned to him as he felt alarm, fear, and doubt.

A few seconds later, he recalled what the cloth puppet was. Since he was an official member of the Nighthawks, he was given the clearance to know about the Grade 3 Sealed Artifact sealed behind Chanis Gate.

"Number: 0625.

"Name: Misfortune Cloth Puppet.

"Danger Grade: 3. Considerably dangerous. It has to be used carefully. It can only be requested for operations that require three or more people.

"Security classification: Official Nighthawk member or above.

"Sealing method: Only needs to be separated from humans.

"Description: The cloth puppet is wearing a regal gown which was popular in around the year 1300. The gown has a stain that is almost impossible to remove. It is uncertain if the stain was present from the very beginning.

"In a few tragic cases of individual family financial crises recorded in Tingen, the police noticed the existence of the puppet. It was always placed in the children's bedroom, on the side table next to the bed.

"A few Nighthawks accepted the request and started an investigation on the puppet.

“The initial evaluation determined that it brought misfortune, causing people around it to be unlucky and find themselves in danger. Finally, they would die one after another. It only took two weeks for the tester to reach the brink of bankruptcy.

“The puppet doesn’t have any living traits. It doesn’t have any inclinations of escaping the seal.

“Through extended periods of experimentation, we discovered that as long as one does not come within ten meters of it for more than half an hour a day, one wouldn’t be tainted with misfortune. If misfortune has befallen someone, the person will immediately have his situation turn for the better as long as the misfortune is transferred to another person.

“Appendix: The puppet first appeared in the house of an old lady, Tess, who lived in the Lower Street of Iron Cross Street. She was a toymaker. Due to old age and her husband’s severe illness, with both her children passing on early, she had no choice but to move to the Iron Cross Street’s Lower Street.

“This was the last toy she sold. She exchanged the puppet for some poison hemlock and ended her and her husband’s lives, having starved for more than three days.”

As Klein recalled the information of Sealed Artifact 3-0625, he felt even more doubtful and horrified.

Didn’t it say the puppet doesn’t have living traits? Didn’t it say that it doesn’t have any inclinations of escaping the seal?

What did I see just now!?

What dragged it back in the end?

The symbol that was drawn on the paper that it unfurled, what does it mean?

That scene earlier was like how a psychotic murderer deals with his victim as the victim slams on the gates heavily and cries for help desperately, only to be dragged back...

While these thoughts flooded him, Klein decided not to make any decision on his own.

He returned to the duty room and pulled a rope.

The rope tightened, the gear spun, and there was suddenly a hurried ringtone that rang on the second floor of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard Mitchell and the other Sleepless who were playing cards in the recreation room immediately put down their poker cards and ran to the basement.

The sound of running footsteps entered Klein's ears, calming him down as he stood at the entrance of the guard room.

Leonard arrived first, holding a revolver. He asked in a solemn voice, "What happened?"

Watching Leonard struggle to stop, Klein suddenly thought of something that Rozanne had mentioned in the past. Three years ago, Leonard, who had just become a Sleepless, tried to run down the flight of stairs despite not having adapted to the potion's power, causing him to fall and roll down.

With a cough, Klein pointed at Chanis Gate and said, "There was a knocking noise from the inside, which then became a loud slamming noise. Then the door was pushed open a little."

"Chanis Gate was pushed open?" the short Kenley asked in shock.

"Yes, a slit was opened." Klein continued his description. He saw that Leonard, Kenley, and Royale had stopped approaching the guard room, instead forming an arc formation a few steps away, loosely surrounding Klein.

He paused for a moment before asking, "Are you suspicious of me?"

"No, it isn't suspicion. This is protocol." Kenley shook his head.

In this tense atmosphere, Leonard maintained his flippant attitude, laughing as he added, "There have been incidents like this in other churches. The Beyonder guarding Chanis Gate lost control and pulled the bell before killing two teammates who came to help."

"Alright." Klein no longer felt angry and aggrieved at being ostracized. Instead, he asked, "Then how should I prove that I haven't lost control?"

Leonard wiped away his flippant smile and tapped his chest four times. With a hoarse voice, he recited softly, "Lacking clothes and food, they have no shelter in the cold.

"They are drenched by rains, and huddle around the rocks for lack of shelter.

"They are orphans snatched from the breast, hope lost on them; they are the poor that have been forced off the proper path.

"The Evernight did not forsake them, but bestowed them with love."

...

The holy, yet pitiful prayer reverberated around the basement, making the bodies, hearts, and souls of everyone present feel purified and tranquil.

Seeing Klein not display any abnormal reactions, Leonard stopped his recital and smiled.

"There's no problem. You are still our trusted partner."

Madam Royale, who had been quiet all this time, looked at Chanis Gate and asked, "What did you see when the gate was pushed open?"

"I saw a Misfortune Cloth Puppet, the one wearing the black classic regal gown, 3-0625," Klein replied, still a little fearful. "But three seconds later, a formless power pulled it back and Chanis Gate was closed once again. What's going on?" Leonard, Kenley, and Royale exchanged looks.

"Heh heh, we are in the same boat as you. We don't know the true cause. But since Chanis Gate is closed once again and there's nothing unusual, we shouldn't enter it at this time. We have to wait till dawn for the Captain."

Royale calmly added, "I will wait here and guard the gate with you."

“Alright.” Leonard moved his hand and gave a bantering laugh. “As the most powerful person here, I shall stay too. Kenley, return to the second floor just in case the police department has an emergency case and cannot open the door.”

Kenley didn’t say much, he just nodded immediately and left.

Leonard glanced at Klein and Royale.

“Perhaps we can continue our card game? It’s best to have some sort of entertainment in circumstances like this, to relax.”

“No problem.” Klein adjusted his revolver and put it back into his underarm holster. Royale didn’t voice an opinion, but instead stroked her smooth, black hair as she entered the guard room.

While playing Fighting the Landlord, no—Fighting Evil, Klein said casually, “Misfortune Cloth Puppet, I mean 3-0625, according to its description, doesn’t have any living traits...”

“Haha, three aces.” Leonard showed his hand and replied with the same casual tone, “In the past forty years, 3-0625 hasn’t displayed any life-like characteristics. We can first assume that the information is correct and make our assumptions based on that.”

“Pass. You already have an idea?” Royale asked simply.

As Klein hesitated to think about whether he should throw his three deuces, Leonard took a sip of his freshly brewed coffee and said, “Yes, since 3-0625 shouldn’t have any life-like characteristics, then its actions today must have been influenced by some other factor. This factor must also be rather recent; otherwise, we would’ve observed this phenomenon a long time ago.”

“Has there been anything different about Chanis Gate over the last month?”

Royale saw Klein toss his three deuces and pondered for a few seconds.

“There is only one thing different; the Antigonus family’s notebook and the Sealed Artifact 2-049 was stored behind Chanis Gate for a night.”

Leonard looked at the cards in his hand and as he tapped the table, he said with a smile, “If 2-049 can make the Misfortune Cloth Puppet act abnormally, then something similar should have happened behind Backlund’s Chanis Gate a long time ago. So I suspect that the problem lies with the Antigonus family’s notebook.”

Klein thought for a moment and nodded.

“That is the most likely explanation... Leonard, I never expected you to be this good at deduction.”

Typically speaking, being a romantic poet and a person with excellent deductive skills was mutually exclusive...

“That’s because he’s recently into detective novels,” Royale explained indifferently. “Two Kings, a straight from 8 to King. Does no one want it? Three 6’s and no more.”

Upon seeing this, Klein and Leonard fell silent.

Having not been concentrating on the game, they forget something important.

Royale was the ‘Evil’ in this round!

Watching Royale cut the deck, Klein took the opportunity to ask, “Then what power pulled 3-0625 back?” Leonard glanced at him and chuckled.

“Do you really think that the defensive mechanisms behind Chanis Gate only consists of the buried sealed chamber and a few elderly keepers?

“In reality, when the sun sets fully, the keepers would have already left Chanis Gate and returned to Saint Selena Cathedral.

“The power in the gate is strongest at night and is no longer safe for any living creature. The power only weakens when the sun rises again. That is also why the Captain asked us not to enter Chanis Gate no matter what we hear.”

In other words, the Captain had forgotten to tell me the reason... Klein thought for a bit before asking, “Defensive mechanisms such as nexus formations?”

Like magnified versions of amulets and charms?

“Yes.” Royale nodded as she stroked the edge of her cards. “There is a reason that Chanis Gates are placed in the central cathedral of each city. The gate is maintained by the followers that go to these churches every day. Their sincere prayers allow a part of their spirituality to enter the nexus formations, and from small contributions comes abundance.”

“I see...” Klein nodded as he saw that he had a lousy hand.

At that moment, Leonard laughed and said, “There isn’t just one defensive mechanism behind Chanis Gate. Saint Selena’s ashes are buried inside. She was a High-Sequence Beyonder when she was still alive.”

The ashes of Saint Selena? Ashes of a High-Sequence Beyonder?

Sacred ashes? What use do those have? Klein was as puzzled as he was curious.

Saint Selena was a devotee when the Church of Evernight was being established. She was active during the Third Epoch and her deeds were written in many holy scriptures. Thus, Saint Selena was a fairly commonly-used name among the commoners who believed in the Evernight Goddess.

Leonard seemed to read Klein’s mind as he continued, “Rumors suggest that the skeleton or ashes of High-Sequence Beyonders still contain incredible power. Of course, those are just rumors.” Klein nodded, focusing his attention on the cards in his hand.

There were no unusual incidents in Chanis Gate for the next few hours, but Klein lost exactly two soli. It pained his heart, but Leonard, who fully expressed his romantic poetic vibes while playing, lost four soli and five pence, leaving Royale as the undisputed winner.

“The sun has just risen, it’s my turn.” The quiet Author, Madam Seeka Tron entered the guard room at six.

Klein wrote the incident he encountered the previous night into the record book and returned to the Blackthorn Security Company with Leonard and Royale.

He felt unusually exhausted, but the Midnight Poet and Sleepless beside him remained energetic.

This is the difference between the different Sequences... Klein was just about to make his way past the partition and catch up on some sleep at home when he suddenly saw the Captain enter.

“Good morning, Captain.” He couldn’t help but yawn when he greeted him.

Dunn, who was in a black trench coat, took off his hat and looked at him with his gray eyes.

“Good morning. You should head back home for some rest. Did anything happen last night?”

Klein immediately gave a succinct summary of the incident regarding the Misfortune Cloth Puppet and Leonard’s deduction.

“Okay.” Dunn didn’t give his opinion. He concentrated on making his way to his office. “I will send a telegraph to the Holy Cathedral.”

Klein didn't stay any longer. He slowly walked out of 36 Zouteland Street and breathed in the cool morning air.

He felt a little more energized, suddenly remembering something he had forgotten all this time.

I forgot to tell the Captain and the rest about the piece of paper in the Misfortune Cloth Puppet's hands!

How could I have forgotten?

It was as if some power was influencing me, stopping me from telling this to the other Nighthawks...

It has been some time since the Antigonus family's notebook was present at Chanis Gate. The Misfortune Cloth Puppet 3-0625 should have been affected long ago. Why did it only show abnormal behavior last night?

Was it because it was the first time I was on shift at Chanis Gate?

It used all of its power to show me the picture on the paper?

What is the motive of the Antigonus family's notebook?

Has it got to do with my survival despite making contact with it? And that I became a Seer?

...

Many suspicions flashed through Klein's brain, rooting him to the spot. He was unsure if he should pretend that he didn't remember anything and make his way home to sleep, or head up and report it to the Captain.

After thinking for a while, Klein decided to return home to confirm something.

He believed that if the Misfortune Cloth Puppet hadn't intentionally shown him the picture on the paper, then the Captain and the rest would definitely find traces in their followup investigations. It wouldn't matter much if he reported it or not.

If it were the converse, it was something worth careful consideration.

That was also what Klein wanted to confirm.

He took the trackless public carriage to Daffodil Street. When he returned home, his brother Benson and his sister Melissa had yet to wake up, since it was Sunday. The living room was dark and quiet.

Klein boiled a kettle of water, threw in some tea leaves, and drank it with wheat bread. Then he took his coat, hat, and cane towards the stairs.

He subconsciously lightened his footsteps to avoid making any loud noises.

Just as he got to the second floor, he saw the bathroom door suddenly open, and Melissa, who was wearing an old dress, came out with a sleepy face.

"You're home..." Melissa was rubbing her eyes sleepily.

Klein covered his mouth and yawned.

"Yeah, I need to crash. Don't wake me up before lunch."

Melissa tersely acknowledged when she suddenly recalled something.

"Benson and I are going to Saint Selena Cathedral pray and attend Mass in the morning. Lunch might be slightly later."

As not-so-devoted believers of the Evernight Goddess, she and Benson went to the church once a fortnight, while Klein, who was a Nighthawk, hadn't entered the church since the last time he was followed by the member of the Secret Order.

No, I'm at the cathedral every day, just that I'm in the cathedral's basement... Klein justified himself subconsciously.

He was currently most worried that the Goddess would abandon him as a fake believer. If his ritualistic magic didn't respond at crucial times, he would be in big trouble.

But then, when one considers Old Neil, the Goddess is quite forgiving towards the Nighthawks. Hmm. That's right! Klein comforted himself.

His scattered thoughts flashed past him, and he looked at Melissa. He nodded and smiled.

"No problem. I can sleep longer then."

Walking past Melissa, he entered his bedroom and locked the door behind him.

Immediately following that, he psyched himself up and took out the ritual dagger and created a sealed spirituality wall.

He took four steps counterclockwise while reciting the incantation and withstood the chaotic roars before appearing above the gray fog.

In the illusionary boundless world, he was the only living spirit sitting on the seat of honor at the long bronze table.

For nearly a minute of silence, Klein conjured a piece of goatskin parchment and wrote down a divination incantation.

"The picture that the Misfortune Cloth Puppet displayed."

Although Klein had seen the mysterious picture on the paper clearly for a split moment last night, he only managed to remember the rough shape of the picture due to his anxiety. But that wasn't a problem for a Seer; he could reproduce anything he remembered and had seen once!

According to mysticism theory, one's spirituality could remember everything they had seen. As long as they possessed the appropriate method, they could reproduce the scene whenever they wished.

Klein even felt that the theory that Spirit Medium Daly described regarding the Psychology Alchemists made sense. Human memory was merely islands that were exposed above the sea; it couldn't withstand much. Hence, a person's spiritual essence remembered most of the information and turned it into the subconscious, which formed the entire ocean.

While spirituality itself, even if it wasn't the entire ocean, also included the entire sea region surrounding the island.

After reciting the divination incantation, Klein leaned backwards and fell asleep through Cogitation.

In the blurry, distorted, separated world, he saw Chanis Gate crack open once again as he heard the heavy grinding noises.

The puppet in the black classic regal gown leaned into the opening of the door and unfurled the paper that it was holding.

On the piece of paper, there were many mysterious symbols that collectively formed a vertical eye.

Klein carefully observed the picture before exiting the dream. Then, with the aid of the uniqueness of the world above the gray fog and the memory that had yet to fade, he expressed the image on the brown parchment.

The vertical eye looked up at him, looking both sinister and mysterious.

Klein thought and wrote below the eye, "This is key to the treasure that the Antigonus family left behind."

Putting down the pen, he untied the silver chain that was wound inside his sleeve. As he held it with his left hand, the topaz pendulum stably hung above the divination statement and the mysterious vertical eye. There weren't any obvious movements.

Klein closed his eyes and recited the sentence with his mind cleared.

After seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the topaz spinning in small circles in a clockwise fashion along with the silver chain.

That meant affirmation.

The vertical eye picture is really key to the treasure that the Antigonus family left behind... Klein nodded in deep thought.

He tapped his fingers on the edge of the long bronze table and muttered to himself, "Because of Ray Bieber's death, there are no descendants of the Antigonus family left. Hence, the notebook views me, the Seer that interacted with it but remains alive, as its inheritor?

"It affected 3-0625 and left the key to the treasure with it, only to show it to me during my shift at Chanis Gate?

"There doesn't seem to be any problem with the logic, but it still doesn't seem very convincing.

"How could the notebook be sure that there are no more descendants of the Antigonus family?

"And I am totally unrelated to that family... If I shared their bloodline, the original Klein wouldn't have committed suicide to begin with.

"Hmm, it doesn't seem to matter if I tell this to the Captain and the team. Let me look into this."

Klein then divined the location of the Antigonus family's treasure. But, unsurprisingly, there was no detailed information. Just like in the letter that Sirius wrote to Mr. Z, Klein could only be certain that the treasure was related to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range and the ancient Nation of the Evernight.

After he finished divining all the matters, Klein noticed that the crimson star from which he had previously heard prayers was producing a faint fluctuation again.

He used the method of answering prayers and touched the illusory star. He saw the brown-haired young man who wore the unique black tight suit again.

The young man was kneeling on the ground, facing the pure crystal ball, still muttering about something.

Klein, who had purposely learned some Jotun, finally understood one of the sentences.

"Pray... Save... Father and Mother."

It really is Jotun... Where in the world is Jotun still used? That's an ancient antique that is thousands of years old... What a pity; the mysterious ruler above the gray fog is totally powerless. I don't have the ability to save them even if I want to... Klein shook his head and sighed. He decided to observe him for a little longer.

I'll see what I can do when I master more Jotun vocabulary and can understand what happened to his father and mother... Klein retracted his spirituality, wrapped it around himself, and initiated a descent.

When he returned to his bedroom, he dispelled the spirituality wall, changed into old but comfortable clothing, and laid down on the bed to get some sleep.

Klein slept all the way till half-past twelve, which was when Melissa finished preparing lunch and came knocking on the door.

After having a fairly sumptuous meal, he saw Melissa bring out her new dress and fishnet hat, looking like she was going out.

"Do you still have something this afternoon?" Klein asked, puzzled.

Benson was seated on the sofa, knitting his eyebrows at his grammar books. He didn't lift his head but answered on her behalf, "Mrs. Shaud from next door told Melissa that there will be a lecture regarding family affairs in the municipal hall in the afternoon. Melissa plans to attend it and learn how to deal with daily household issues."

Melissa nodded and said, "I got Selena and Elizabeth to join me."

"That's nice. I hope that the lecturer tells you that a family like us needs to hire at least one maidservant," Klein joked.

Noticing that Melissa was about to refute him, he immediately added, "We have to invest our limited time into more valuable matters."

Melissa was stunned. After a while, she puckered her lips, put on her fishnet hat, and left the house.

...

At two in the afternoon, Klein arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company again.

Rozanne and Dunn Smith, who happened to be in the reception hall, asked in unison, "Didn't you go home and rest?" Klein smiled.

"I was going to go to the Divination Club, but I kept thinking about what happened last night, so I decided to come over here first. Has there been any reply from the Holy Cathedral?"

Dunn shot a glance at Rozanne and turned around silently. He walked past the partition and entered his office.

Rozanne pulled her face at his back, then muttered angrily, “Seriously, Captain...”

Well done! Klein complimented silently. He held back his laughter and followed Dunn into his office.

Klein shut the door, and Dunn sniffed his smoking pipe before he said, “The Holy Cathedral has determined that the disturbance was because of the Antigonus family notebook, which they reclassified as a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact. It’s a pity. That means that you no longer have the sufficient security clearance to read it.”

Grade 1. Highly dangerous. Only the ranks above bishops and Nighthawks team captains can know of the actual situation? That also means that Captain has no idea what’s happening... Highly dangerous, no wonder... Klein felt regretful yet relaxed.

Dunn gave him a glance and continued, “The Holy Cathedral told us to check if there are any other items behind Chanis Gate that were contaminated by the notebook. After verification, only 3-0625 was abnormal, and we have already changed its seal.”

“Did you discover anything else?” Klein pretended to ask curiously.

Dunn shook his head.

“No.”

Klein nodded in thought. He didn’t continue with the topic. After some small talk, he bade farewell and left for the Divination Club to continue his ‘journey of digestion’.

...

In the municipal hall.

The three best friends, Melissa, Selena, and Elizabeth, sat near the door, waiting for the lecture to begin.

“If she delivers a bad lecture, we’ll sneak out,” Selena suggested excitedly.

Elizabeth immediately agreed, “Let’s go shopping at Harrods.”

Sometime later, the lecturer, who had relatively high cheekbones, walked up the wooden podium. She cleared her throat and said, “Good morning, kind, charitable ladies. I am Xaviera Hedda. What I am about to share with you today are my experiences in managing family expenses. There are three parts, the first being how a family with an annual income of a hundred pounds should balance food, housing, clothing, and employing helpers. The second would be where a family earning two hundred pounds yearly should be increasing their expenditure to appear more decent...”

Melissa listened attentively. She had her brothers’ annual income at her fingertips.

It’s already over two hundred pounds... she thought, half in relief and half in fear.

She was relieved and satisfied with her current life, but was also afraid that this way of life would vanish in the blink of an eye.

At this point, the wine red-haired Selena covered her mouth. She told her two friends quietly, “She seems to be a believer of the Lord of Storms. She’s wearing a Storm badge.”

Melissa looked over and saw Xaviera wearing a badge depicting violent winds and tumultuous waves on her left chest.

She quickly explained, “Mrs. Shaud who told me about this seminar is also a follower of the Lord of Storms. I don’t think it’s strange that the speaker is a follower too.”

“Yeah, I don’t think there is a problem here. We are here to learn how to budget,” Elizabeth concurred with Melissa.

“But other than Melissa, we don’t need to, nor do we have the right to govern our families’ finances.” Selena pouted.

Elizabeth rebutted without hesitation, “But we’ll get married eventually and form our own families.”

Selena had been a little afraid of Elizabeth after the incident of the demon mirror divination. She nodded in embarrassment and pretended to listen to the lecture attentively.

The lecturer, Xaviera, raised her right hand and said, “The premise of any form of budgeting is to respect the opinion of the man of the household. They are the source of income, the pillar of the family. They face anxiety, stress, troubles, and disorder in society in order to obtain everything for us. Thus, we have to create a serene home, one free from troubles from the outside. This will allow them to relax when they come home, allow their souls to be cleansed, allow them to be more prepared to face the challenges to come...

“So, as the famous philosopher, sociologist, humanities scholar, and economist Mr. Leumi once said, a woman is the angel of a household.”

Selena stroked her cheek and traced her dimples as she whispered with a little excitement, “Leumi, the person who said that humans are born free?”

Elizabeth hesitated before answering. “Yes, but he is a believer of the Lord of Storms.”

At this point, the lecturer, Xaviera, continued, “Mr. Leumi also informs us that females are innately flawed when it comes to intelligence and logic. In that case, unable to judge for themselves whether they should accept the judgment of father and husband as that of the church....” [1]

Melissa, Selena, and Elizabeth looked at each other, speechless, after hearing such a description.

“Let’s go?” Selena finally suggested.

Melissa and Elizabeth nodded.

“Alright!”

They took their veiled hats and bent over, sneaking over to the side door in an attempt to leave without attracting any attention.

When they cautiously arrived outside and could finally stand up straight, they suddenly heard a burst of applause coming from the small hall.

Melissa instinctively looked back into the hall.

She saw Mrs. Shaud, as well as many other ladies, clapping.

Phew! Praise the Lady... Melissa exhaled. She left the uncomfortable place together with Selena and Elizabeth.

"Shall we go to Harrods?" Selena suggested as she stood under a tree. She had already forgotten about what had just happened.

Melissa fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "I plan on returning home to study."

"Study..." Selena fiddled with her wine-red hair, as if she had returned to her regular life.

"Also, I have to buy bread, beef, potatoes, and fruits... Klein needs to work today, Benson went to the municipal library. So, yeah, I have to go back!" Melissa suddenly realized how much she loved her textbooks, her gears and springs.

Selena decided to keep her distance from the unusually weird Melissa. She turned to look at Elizabeth and smiled dutifully, "Shall we go to Harrods together? Even though I've spent all my savings, it's still wonderful to window shop."

"Sure." Elizabeth accepted the suggestion, then asked casually, "Melissa, does your brother, Klein, have to work on Sundays?"

"Yes, he rests on Mondays, different from ordinary jobs." Melissa unknowingly raised her head slightly.

...

After leaving the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein took a public carriage to Howes Street.

He tried his hardest to suppress his emotions, to not think about the issue of the Antigonus family's treasure. He tried to focus his attention back onto the matter of acting.

It was important to fully digest the potion as soon as possible! Improving himself was extremely important no matter when it was!

Acting as a Seer, heh! I'm not professional enough. The fortune tellers back in the Foodaholic Empire had to go through the almanac all the time before they accomplished anything... Klein held his cane as he sat inside a carriage.

He had decided to divine if it was beneficial for him to travel to the Divination Club today.

That was more befitting of a Seer!

As he was getting off the carriage, Klein took out a halfpence coin. His field of vision narrowed, his pupils becoming darker as he silently recited, *It is suitable to head to the Divination Club today.*

It is suitable to head to the Divination Club today.

...

Dang!

Klein flicked the coin up. He didn't look at the rotation of the coin, calmly extending his hand instead.

Thunk! The halfpence landed in the middle of his palm.

This time, the number 1⁄2 was facing up.

With the number facing up, that means that I would encounter an unfortunate incident at the Divination Club today... Klein thought for a moment before he turned to the opposite side of the street. He waited for the public carriage that was headed for Daffodil Street.

He felt more and more like a charlatan.

...

Howes Street, at the entrance to Harrods Department Store.

Selena was just about to enter the building when she suddenly froze and looked to the side.

"Did something happened?" Elizabeth asked, puzzled.

Selena puffed her cheeks and said, "Elizabeth, I thought about my mysticism teacher, Mr. Vincent. He passed away just like that, the morning after my birthday..."

"Could it be because I peeked and used his secret incantations? I've always felt guilty and uneasy because of this... Besides, I've been rather unlucky recently." "So?" Elizabeth asked quietly.

Selena bit her lips and said, "I wish to do a divination at the Divination Club over there and see if Mr. Vincent's death had anything to do with me."

From what happened at my birthday banquet... I have this nagging feeling that Elizabeth is hiding something from me... I remember the back of the man in a tuxedo...

"Can't you divine it yourself?" Elizabeth asked in surprise.

Selena sighed, imitating her father.

"Sigh, I cannot divine it given my current condition."

"Alright, let's head to the Divination Club first." Elizabeth agreed to her friend's suggestion.

They headed over to the side and made their way to the Divination Club on the second floor by following the stairs.

"Hello, good afternoon, Miss Angelica. It's a pleasure meeting you again." Selena gave a lively greeting at the reception area.

Angelica smiled and said, "You should be able to find me here as long as you come after lunch."

Selena exchanged niceties before lamenting Hanass Vincent's death, she then said, "I need to have a divination performed."

"You know the rules of the club. Here is the list of members willing to do it... It's the weekend, so most of our members are here," Angelica explained like clockwork.

Selena and Elizabeth huddled their heads together as they scanned the list of names and description together.

"I used to just ask for my teacher directly. To think that the club would have this many members willing to do divinations compared to last year," Selena said excitedly.

Suddenly, she paused for a few seconds and said in puzzlement, "Klein Moretti, Klein Moretti? Isn't this name the same as Melissa's brother?"

Elizabeth froze. She looked repeatedly at the name 'Klein Moretti' and nodded, "That's true..."

"Miss Angelica, is this Mr. Klein Moretti around?" Selena asked with a sparkle in her eyes.

Angelica shook her head.

"My apologies, Mr. Moretti didn't come to the club today."

“Alright, we’ll find someone else.” Selena didn’t mind not seeing the person, but she laughed at her friend. “I know that this can’t be Melissa’s brother, but having seen this name, I naturally thought of a newspaper; a headline worthy of the Intis Press.”

The Intis Press was created by Emperor Roselle, famous for its attention-grabbing headlines. It was one of the most famous newspapers in the Northern Continent.

Elizabeth asked inattentively, “What headline?”

Selena cleared her throat and said, “Is it the decay of morals, or a problem with society? History graduate actually ends up doing divinations over the weekends to make a living!”

---

1. Adapted from Emile, or On Education.

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Audrey Hall sat on a suspended chair in a windy corner and looked at the flowers that were blooming under the sun. She thought of Fors Wall's request.

According to Viscount Glaint, there really was a young girl named Xio Derecha being impounded at a temporary prison located in Backlund's North Borough.

She was charged with grievous assault against a decent gentleman due to a financial conflict. She caused the man to be bedridden, and he might not be able to stand on his feet ever again.

Regarding that, Fors's explanation was that the gentleman wasn't a nice person but the head of a gang in Backlund's East Borough. He made a living by being an usury.

The cause of the incident was when one of the borrowers found out that the interest was several times higher than he expected, so much so that it was impossible to return the amount of money even after he bankrupted himself. When his discussion with the gentleman ended fruitless, he found the famous intermediator, Xio Derecha, hoping that she could persuade the other party to waive the unreasonable portion of the loan.

That gentleman didn't respond well to Xio Derecha's attempts at arbitration, and even threatened to capture the borrower's wife and children that night. Hence, Xio Derecha switched tactics and chose to use physical means. Accidentally, she caused severe damage to the man.

Viscount Glaint investigated the matter and confirmed that Fors Wall was telling the truth. He also confirmed that the gangster had lost control of his underlings. Moreover, after a midnight visit by someone, the borrower's debts were waived. A statement was sent to the prosecutor to plead mercy for Xio Derecha. However, an assault case of such severity wasn't dropped even when the victim decided not to pursue a trial.

"Glaint wished to solve the problem through normal means. He sent people to talk to lawyers that he was familiar with, but they were only confident of winning a lighter sentence, but it would be very difficult to acquit her from the crime unless she obtains a medical certification stating that she is mentally incompetent or mentally undeveloped..." Audrey muttered to herself, leaning in support towards her friend's opinion.

To her, it was best to not have any relationship with Fors Wall and Xio Derecha. Ever since the Tarot Club, Audrey felt that she was no longer an innocent and naive young lady.

"Tomorrow night, there will be a dance at Earl Wolf's residence. I should tell Glaint then to act according to the lawyer's suggestion." Audrey nodded slightly as she made a decision.

In the Loen Kingdom, lawyers were either barristers or solicitors. The latter didn't need to be involved in court affairs, and were responsible for gathering evidence, talking to the parties involved, setting up wills on their clients' behalf, supervising property allocation, and providing legal consultation. Of course, they could also represent their clients to attend the most basic magistrate court and defend simple cases.

Barristers, on the other hand, were responsible for researching evidence and defending their clients in court. According to the Loen Kingdom's laws, they had to maintain an objective attitude so they couldn't make direct contact with the litigant. They could only communicate with them through their assistants, who were solicitors, to gain complete understanding of the situation. They were all true law experts who possessed outstanding communication skills and were skilled in debate.

The relaxed Audrey observed the colorful flowers outside while hidden in the darkness when she recalled something.

Medical certification stating she was mentally incompetent... Psychiatrist...

If the Psychology Alchemists have grasped 'acting', does that mean that they can be found amongst psychiatrists?

Audrey felt that her train of thought was on the correct path, and her eyes shimmered like a lustrous gemstone.

Just then, she saw her golden retriever, Susie sneak behind the flower bushes, to a spot where only the gardener would be able to reach.

Susie... What is she doing? Audrey hid in the shadows and looked in a daze.

The golden retriever's sense of smell seemed to be confused by the flowers all around her that she failed to notice her owner behind her. She opened her mouth and produced sounds that was akin to one's exercising of their voice.

Then, it caused the surrounding air to vibrate into words that were jerky and unmellow.

"Hello. "How are you?"

...

Audrey's mouth widened as she completely forgot about the etiquette an elegant lady should have. She couldn't believe the scene before her and the stiff voice that she had just heard.

She suddenly stood up and asked, "Susie, you can talk? When did you learn how to talk?"

The golden retriever jumped in fright as she turned around to look at her owner.

She shook her tail nervously and very quickly. She opened and closed her mouth a few times, vibrating the surrounding air.

"I... I don't know how to explain. I am a dog, after all." Upon hearing that, Audrey was suddenly at a

loss for words.

...

Monday morning, Klein followed his plan to revise and consolidate his mysticism knowledge. Then, he took the public carriage to Khoy University.

He wanted to increase his interactions with Mr. Azik and find out exactly what he knew.

In the three-story gray building of the history department, Klein and his teacher, Cohen Quentin, chatted for a while and exchanged their information regarding the historical ruins on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range.

Having not learned anything new, he seized the opportunity to enter the office diagonally opposite when his mentor left to handle certain matters. He then walked over to Azik's desk. The lecturer had stayed behind to take care of some matters.

"Mr. Azik, can I have a chat with you?" He asked the man with the tanned skin, gentle facial features, and the small mole below his right ear. He took off his hat and bowed.

With eyes that seemed to have seen the vicissitudes of life, Azik tidied his books and replied, "Sure, let's take a walk by the Khoy's banks."

"Alright." Klein held his cane and followed him out of the threestory gray building.

Along the way, they maintained their silence. Neither of them spoke.

When the flowing river water entered their vision and there were no teachers or students passing by, Azik suddenly stopped in his tracks. He turned his body halfway, faced Klein, and asked, “Is there something I can help you with?”

Klein remained silent for a long while, thinking of several tactful ways of asking his questions, but he gave up on all of them.

Therefore, he spoke frankly and directly asked, “Mr. Azik, you are a trustworthy person, a respectable gentleman. I would like to know what you can see in me, or should I say, what do you know? I am referring to the previous incident when you said that there was something disharmonious in my fate.”

Azik put down his cane and sighed as he laughed.

“I never expected you to be so straightforward. I’m quite at a loss how to answer you.

“To be frank, disharmony in your fate was the only thing that I could see. Other than that, I don’t know any more than you do.”

Klein hesitated and asked, “But how could you tell? I don’t believe that this was derived from divination.”

Azik looked sideways towards the Khoy River. His intonation was tainted with some bleakness.

“No, Klein, you don’t understand. Divination can reach that kind of level. It only depends on the person doing the divination. Of course, my divination was merely an excuse.

“Some people are... special. They are born with some strange ability. I think I am someone like that.”

“You think?” Klein acutely caught the word that the other man used.

“Yes, I am not sure if I was born with it. Perhaps, the price of my ability is to forget myself, to forget my past, to forget my parents.” Azik’s eyes were clouded with melancholy as he looked at the river.

Klein was increasingly confused.

“Forget the past?”

Azik smiled without any humor.

“Before I entered the Backlund University’s history department, I lost most of my memory. I only remembered my name and some basic knowledge. Luckily, I still had my identification documents. Otherwise, I probably would have ended up homeless. All these years, I’ve tried to search for my parents using my identification documents, but I never found anything, even though I could see a corner of Fate.

“During my few years in the university, I gradually realized that I possessed some strange but unique powers, powers that go beyond common sense.”

Klein listened attentively and asked, “Mr. Azik, why did you lose your memory? No, I mean—did you find out why you lost your memory?”

He suspected that Mr. Azik was a member of the Life School of Thought who had lost his memories, and that he might even be a Mid-Sequence Beyonder that held an above average position. It was a secret organization that had potion Sequences for Monster and Soothsayer. It was an organization that was mainly passed down through master-disciple relationships.

Azik shook his head vigorously.

“No, it felt like I just had slept, I’ve forgotten everything that happened in the past.”

He walked forward a few steps with his cane in his hand. He spoke as he walked.

“After I left Backlund, I started dreaming. I dreamed about a lot of strange things...”

Dreams? I am good at interpreting dreams! The conversation was entering Klein's domain of expertise as he immediately asked, "What kind of dream?"

Azik let out a muffled laugh and said, "Many different kinds of dreams. Sometimes, I would dream of the internals of a dark mausoleum. I would dream of ancient coffins with corpses in them. They would have white feathers growing out from their backs. Sometimes, I would dream of myself being a knight covered in armor, holding a three-meter-long spear while charging towards the enemy.

"Sometimes, I dream of myself as a feudal lord, having a rich and fertile fief, with a beautiful wife and three children. Sometimes, I dream of myself as a tramp, walking on a muddy road in the rain, feeling cold and hungry.

"Sometimes, I dream of myself having a daughter, a different daughter than the previous children. She would have long smooth black hair, and she enjoys sitting on the swing that I made. She always asks for sweets from me. Sometimes, I dream of myself standing next to the gallows, looking towards a dead body hanging up there coldly."

Listening to Azik raving like a madman, Klein suddenly realized that he couldn't interpret the dreams because his various dreams symbolized opposite, contradictory things!

Azik retracted his gaze as his voice no longer sounded ethereal.

"The Feynapotter Kingdom in the south believes in Earth Mother, and the Church of Earth Mother promotes a belief. They believe that every life is a plant, absorbing the nutrients from the earth. Growing slowly, prospering, and withering.

"When they wither, these lives fall to the earth and return to the mother's embrace. In the coming year, they grow again. They would blossom then wither, year after year. Life is as such, one life after another.

"Sometimes, I am very willing to believe in this concept. I believe because of my uniqueness, I can dream of previous lives, and the lives before that."

At this point, he looked at Klein and said with a sigh, "I haven't mentioned any of this to Cohen before. The reason I'm telling you is because I..."

Azik paused and smiled.

"I apologize. My description earlier was not precise enough. The disharmony in your fate is not the only thing that I could see. I can also see another thing.

"Klein, you are not an ordinary person anymore. You possess an extraordinary, strange power, one very similar to mine."

Mr. Azik can tell that I'm a Beyonder? His ability is truly powerful... Klein froze for a moment before he gave an honest reply.

"Yes."

He thought for a while before adding, "Because of what happened to Welch and Naya."

"It's as I thought..." Azik sighed. "There were two people with extraordinary powers amongst the group of police that came to question me and Cohen."

It was probably Captain and Leonard. They were in charge of Welch's case... Klein nodded slightly, not interrupting Azik.

Azik raised his cane and said, "You should have entered their circle. I hope that you can help me search for clues of my origin. You do not need to go out of your way to do it, just note it down if you find any clues."

Upon saying that, Azik wore a bitter smile.

"I don't know any other person with extraordinary powers... You cannot imagine what emotions a man without a past has. You are like a boat floating in a vast ocean. The most terrifying thing is not facing a storm, but not being able to find a harbor. The inability to navigate to shore. All you can do is take on disaster after disaster, with no end in sight, never to feel peace and safety."

No Mr. Azik, I know how it feels, for I am in a similar position. Fortunately for me, I have the memory fragments of the original Klein, as well as Melissa and Benson... Klein answered silently before he asked, "Mr. Azik, why didn't you join a similar group when you possess such magical ability and search for clues yourself?"

Azik looked into Klein's eyes and let out a self-deprecating smile.

"Because I'm afraid. I'm afraid of death."

He sighed and continued, "I have gotten used to life like this. I like my life. I don't have the courage to take that risk, so I can count on you."

Klein didn't say any more. He promised, "I'll pay special attention if I come across any clues."

"Alright, we should return to the office. Let's have lunch together with Cohen when he's done with work. Do you remember? The East Balam Restaurant in the university is quite good. Heh, my treat." Azik lifted his cane and pointed to a direction.

My apologies, I really have no memories of that. How could the studying original Klein have afforded the East Balam Restaurant? Even if Welch was treating, he would still reject going to such an expensive place... Klein pressed on his hat and returned to the third level of the grayish-stone building which housed the history department with Azik.

A few steps later, Azik suddenly spoke.

"I'll be on summer break after I finish settling all my work at the university. You can visit me at my house or write to me."

Klein nodded and said casually, "Mr. Azik, I thought that you would head to Desi Bay for a vacation."

"No, it is too hot in the south right now. I don't like the so-called sunbathing. Look at my skin color; it tans easily. I'd rather head to the Winter County, to the north of the Feysac Empire to ski, sightsee, or hunt seals." Azik, who had a bronze skin tone, smiled as he replied.

I would too... Klein, who had just joined the Nighthawks, revealed a look of envy.

After lunch, Klein returned home and took a nap before beginning his revision and study of charms and amulets. He hoped to grasp them quickly to create objects that could at least be used in battle and help him.

When it was approaching three in the afternoon, Klein packed his stuff and sealed the room with a wall of spirituality.

...

In the majestic divine hall above the gray fog sat a long, ancient mottled table.

Klein sat at the seat of honor, his face enveloped by the thick fog. He looked at the still-obscured Justice and The Hanged Man as they appeared at their designated seats.

Hmm, Miss Justice's emotions doesn't seem too stable. Worry, unease, and a little lost... Klein observed the only female member of the Tarot Club with his Spirit Vision.

Words couldn't describe Audrey Hall's emotions. She was extremely shocked by Susie's sudden speech.

She had imagined a future with herself as a great detective or famous psychologist bringing along her assistant Susie, but if that became the dog detective Susie bringing along her assistant Miss Audrey, then it would be a little, a little...

No, not a little, it would be straight up weird! It leaves me lost! Audrey suddenly sat up straight. She wanted to request for Mr. Fool's and The Hanged Man's help.

But she swallowed the words she was about to say.

Hmm, how should I ask this? What should I do if my pet is abnormal?

How should I interact with a pet that can speak, one that has decent intelligence?

No, no, no, this is the Tarot Club, not an experience sharing on pets. I bet that the good impression that The Hanged Man and Mr. Fool have of me would shatter if I ask those questions!

Audrey's mind whirled. Finally, she organized her words and said, "Honorable Mr. Fool and Mr. Hanged Man, who has helped me all this time, I have a question to ask. What can a pet with Beyonder powers do for its owner? In other words, how useful is it?"

She had just said her piece when she noticed Mr. Fool and The Hanged Man slip into silence. The atmosphere became a little weird.

Hey hey hey, say something, don't look at me with those eyes, I did nothing! Really, I was asking for a friend! Audrey wanted to burrow into a hole out of shame.

She deeply regretted asking that question.

Considering that she had previously asked what would happen if an ordinary animal consumed a Sequence potion, did she share the potion she formulated with her pet? That seems like something only Miss Justice would do... I feel a little pathetic being the boss of a 'heretic cult' with her as a member... Klein lifted his right hand and propped it against his forehead and pinched it twice without giving an answer.

The Hanged Man Alger Wilson was silent for nearly twenty seconds before he replied in a strange tone, "That depends on what kind of Beyonder powers the pet has. For example, if it's a Spectator, then it can help you observe or listen in on certain occasions. As you know, most humans are wary of each other, but would never suspect that a pet would be eavesdropping on them, even if the pet was sitting right by their feet."

It makes sense! Father would avoid me when discussing important matters with the nobles, cabinet members, and other ministers. They would often lock the door to the room. But if Susie could hide long

enough to be locked in with them, then she wouldn't be chased away... Also many ladies like to interact within private social circles... Audrey had a sparkle in her eyes as many thoughts welled in her mind.

Also, since Susie can speak now, she can tell me the content of the meetings directly... Susie is great! I have to treat you well. I have to teach you proper pronunciation and vocabulary...

Hmm, should I teach Susie the aristocratic pronunciation or a more normal Backlund accent? Would other dogs pick up on where Susie comes from when they interact? Wait, why am I considering this? Susie wouldn't use human language when interacting with other dogs...

Wait, Mr. Hanged Man, why did you use Spectator as an example? C-could you have guessed what happened?

Audrey's expression changed. She regained her posture and smiled.

"Mr. Fool, I found another page of Emperor Roselle's diary." *I got this from Fors Wall.*

"Great, you have repaid what you owed," Klein replied in a good mood.

"I am sorry, but there's not much content on this page of the diary." Audrey was conjuring the content she remembered onto the piece of goatskin.

Klein raised his hand and made the goatskin parchment appear in his palm before saying, "That doesn't affect my promise. Furthermore, the parts of the diary you handed me previously had two pages."

The pages collected by Justice and The Hanged Man were not originals. They were copied by researchers. Some would copy it on one page for recording purposes, while others kept the original look of the diary for convenience.

Klein looked down at the few lines of text on the page.

"20th December. A new year approaches, but the feedback I received is making me very confused and troubled.

"There is no crude oil in this world! There's no crude oil to be found!"

No crude oil? It couldn't be found for some reason, or there really wasn't any available?

From the period Emperor Roselle was assassinated till this day, about a hundred and fifty years have passed, and there are still no traces of crude oil...

Klein's pupils constricted as his hand quivered while holding the diary.

No crude oil not only meant that the future of the internal combustion engine became uncertain, it would also lead to a state of stagnation in the chemical industry. In other words, Earth's modern industrial age would never transpire here!

In short, the development of this world was uncertain to Klein.

Although he couldn't invent things, he had assumed that he was still at an advantage because he knew a bit of everything and could foresee the direction of technological development. When he saved enough money, he could make a risky investment on an industry that he thought showed promise. Furthermore, he wouldn't put all his eggs in one basket.

Klein thought that it was only a matter of time until he could own enormous wealth. By then, he would hire the so-called white gloves as representatives to establish international charity foundations. On the surface, they would provide relief to the poor. In reality, they would actually be establishing and funding a revolt, in order to fight against the higher strata of society and enhance the living standards of the people in the lower class.

If he were to find a method of returning to Earth, he would segregate his property. A third to Benson, a third to Melissa, and a third for his foundation.

However, it was a pity that his perfect vision of the future was instantly half-shattered.

Luckily, there's still electricity and magnetism in this world. The telegram is a successful example, I should mainly invest in this in the future... Klein settled down and read down row by row.

"21st December. I'm no longer thinking about crude oil anymore. Upgrading my Sequence level is what matters!

"22nd December. The filthy environment in Richeux Borough is unacceptable. If I hadn't visited incognito, I might've never known that it still looks the same as when I was young. I want to gather all my ministers and formulate a 'Capital Sewer and Public Toilet Enhancement Plan'. Hmm, I have to rectify the people's bad habits. Let them boil hot water for consumption, wash their hands and faces frequently, don't litter, don't pee and poop anywhere, use condoms if possible... Haha, I thought of what to name this campaign: the Patriotic Health Campaign!

"Hence, the invention of the condom has to be brought forward. There's also masks, paper cups, and others. Yes, even the most primitive version would do. Give it a try. I have to thank this world for they still have rubber trees.

"23rd December. Perhaps I should consider that suggestion. Keep a back door for myself outside of the Church of the God of Craftsmanship. For example, I could join that ancient and mysterious organization which influences the world from the shadows?"

Klein then suddenly realized that there was nothing else at the bottom. His emotions were indescribable.

Emperor Roselle, what was the name of the ancient and mysterious organization that was influencing the world from the shadows? Do I know it?

How could you stop here? Why didn't you write more?

It's just like when I used to read novels. When I read till the end and realized that the author ended up dropping the novel...

And Patriotic Health Campaign? The Emperor sure knows how to have fun...

The contents of the diary should've been written after he became the Consul of the Intis Republic. He might already have called himself the Emperor Caesar.

I have to read some books when I get back and flip through some historical texts of other countries. I have to see which year the 'Capital Sewer and Public Toilet Enhancement Plan' took place.

After his nearly twenty seconds of silence, Klein reined back his thoughts and let the diary in his hands vanish into thin air.

"You can start your discussion now."

Audrey let out a breath of relief and adjusted her state to become a Spectator. She smiled faintly and said, "I'd like to know if there are any Sequence potion named Arbiter, or a kind of Beyonder that can go through wooden doors or make locks ineffective?"

I know about this... Enveloped in the grayish-white fog, Klein was going to reply, but The Hanged Man answered first.

"I need you to help me investigate something in return for the answer."

"What is it?" Audrey asked with interest as well as with puzzlement.

Alger glanced towards The Fool and said, "I'd like to know if the King has the intention of taking revenge on the Feysac Empire and launching a new war on the East coast of Balam within this year or before June of next year."

The Tarot Club was currently using the Loen language, which was confirmed by the trio's accents at the first Gathering. Hence, Alger knew that Miss Justice was a noble in the Loen Kingdom while he also believed that Miss Justice knew that he was a Loen.

As for The Fool, Alger believed that His behavior as a Loen was merely a disguise, a disguise that would ease the discussion.

Ever since the ritualistic magic, Alger started using 'Him' to address The Fool politely.

Audrey recalled everything that she heard from various social events. She nodded confidently and said, "No problem, but I would need sufficient time to be certain."

"I can wait." Alger smiled and said, "With Mr. Fool as a witness, I believe you wouldn't go back on your promise."

Audrey looked towards the quiet yet mysterious Fool engulfed in gray fog as the corner of her mouth curved upwards.

"But I think the value of this information is worth more than both questions put together."

"When you confirm the answer, I'll provide compensation depending on the situation," Alger replied with an answer he prepared beforehand.

Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, do you need virtual currency to determine value? Klein smiled and leaned backwards while he looked at the two people before him.

Audrey relaxed and cheered for herself in her mind.

Well done! Audrey, you learned how to negotiate! She was so excited that she nearly broke out of her Spectator state. She quickly thought of something and asked, "Oh right, Mr. Hanged Man, did you receive the one thousand pounds?"

"I'm sorry, I'm still sailing. I have yet to return to land." Alger wasn't willing to bring it up. He answered her original question, "The Beyonder that can go through wooden doors and foil locks would probably be Sequence 9 Apprentice. The secret organization, Theosophy Order, has its formula.

However, don't ignore the possibility that it was obtained through other channels, such as an ancient tomb of the Fourth Epoch."

The Theosophy Order, the secret organization that has countless ties with the Demoness Sect... Klein rubbed his chin with his finger leisurely.

Seeing that Mr. Fool didn't refute what was said, Audrey couldn't help but sigh.

"If I had found the formula for Apprentice before, I might not have opted for Spectator."

The performance was simply outstanding!

Alger didn't bother with Miss Justice's remark but continued his explanation, "There is also a Sequence potion that is entitled Arbiter. I think you should be familiar with it, because it is the Sequence pathway that the Augustus and Feynapotter Kingdom's Castiya family has. Of course, the low Sequence formulas were used as rewards in ancient times. Some nobles might have

received it before."

The Augustus family was a royal family of the Loen Kingdom while the Castiya family was a royal family in the Feynapotter Kingdom.

It turns out that the Augustus family are all Arbiters... Audrey was enlightened and felt that it cleared up her suspicion.

She sighed and thought, *It's no wonder I've always gone along with their arrangements, always uncomfortable, always willing to admit defeat, like I'm never myself when I'm before them! I thought it was because I was timid...*

"The Arbiter has a convincing charm and considerable authority, as well as outstanding combat ability that can deal with the unexpected," Alger described the situation simply.

Audrey nodded slowly and leaned backwards. She then spoke elegantly, "I have no more questions."

Alger thought and looked towards the seat of honor at the long bronze table.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, I'd like to ask if the True Creator's Holy Residence that the Aurora Order advocates is the legendary Forsaken Land of God?"

Forsaken Land of God? I have only seen that term once in Roselle's diary... It might be in the secret dockets of the Nighthawks, but it isn't something I can know of currently... How do you want me to answer? Klein nearly twitched the corner of his lips.

He considered it for a while then he replied in a calm tone, "This is not something you should know now."

Alger felt his heart tighten, and he immediately lowered his head and replied, "Please forgive me for overstepping my boundaries."

Audrey wanted to ask about the Forsaken Land of God but she also gave up the thought when she heard that.

In the lofty divine hall above the gray fog, silence suddenly filled the air.

At that moment, Audrey felt that she should say something.

"Mr. Fool, if—and I'm saying if—I have the opportunity to join another organization, such as the Psychology Alchemists, is it permitted?"

Klein maintained his posture of leaning backward as he said with a chuckle, "That is no problem. My requirement is that the existence of the Tarot Club is not to be exposed."

"If you become a member of another organization, the materials and information you can use for exchange will also increase."

After saying that, he suddenly recalled that he was also a member of another organization. He was a real Nighthawk while The Hanged Man was most likely related to the Church of Storms.

Would my Tarot Club be the so-called Rebels Alliance? Traitor Gathering? Klein was drowned in deep thoughts.

“I understand now.” Audrey was excited but she immediately thought of a question, “Mr. Fool, if I found a suitable gentleman or lady for this gathering, could I guide them to join? How do I do that?”

Alger thought and asked, “Mr. Fool, what is the requirement to be a member of this gathering? How do we determine?”

Ambitious, ethical, cultured, disciplined... Four words popped into Klein’s head instantly.

He maintained his silence for a few seconds and only spoke when Justice and Hanged Man appeared a little uneasy.

“You can inform me here of people who you find suitable. I will decide if they will join us. Before that, you can’t give any hint that would cause the secret of the Tarot Club’s existence to be exposed. You must remember, to non-Gathering members...” Klein paused and said in a heavy voice, “You must not speak my name without my permission.”

“You must not speak my name without my permission.”

...

Several minutes after the Gathering ended, Audrey and Alger, who had returned to their bedroom and ship respectively, could still hear the words of The Fool reverberating in their ears.

Their impression of the mysterious and powerful Mr. Fool was normally relaxed, calm, and unfathomable. It was rare that he would adopt such a stern, supercilious attitude.

Because of that, they were exceptionally alarmed. They submitted to his wishes sincerely.

They were no strangers to words like that, but these instructions were normally recorded within The Revelation of Evernight or The Book of Storms!

...

In the West Borough of Tingen City, on Daffodil Street.

Klein pulled open the curtains and allowed the golden sunlight to pour into his bedroom.

He had inspected the star that previously sent out a prayer after Justice and The Hanged Man left, but didn’t obtain any information this time round.

Since the crimson star had the ability to store prayers, akin to sending offline messages, Klein believed that the youth who spoke Jotun hadn’t prayed again from the last two times he entered the world above the giant.

This made him suspect that there was no hope left for the youth’s parents, and that the young man had chosen to give up...

With his back facing the sunlight, Klein walked to the edge of his bed and laid down. He didn’t want to move.

He knew that he shouldn’t waste any time and head to the Divination Club and continue the process of digesting the potion, but he didn’t want to move. He laid silently on his bed, enjoying his rare break.

He had a full schedule from Tuesday to Friday, mysticism lessons and practicals in the mornings, shooting and combat training in the afternoons. He was mentally exhausted by the time evening came around. There was no change in his morning routine on Saturday, but he had to guard Chanis Gate in the afternoon. He would’ve stayed underground until the dawn of Sunday.

Sunday morning was time for Klein to catch up on sleep. In the afternoon, circumstances would determine if he went to the Divination Club. On Monday morning, he had just returned from Khoy University in the morning and had the Tarot Gathering in the afternoon. He also had to think about the issue of acting as a Seer. In other words, he had been busy the entire week, with no time to rest.

Thus, all Klein wanted to do was laze around, lying on his bed like a loser, not doing anything except daydreaming.

No, how can a boss of a cult be so worthless. If Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man caught wind of this, their impression of me would shatter... Klein buried his face into his blanket and motivated himself.

“I have the formula for the Clown potion, all I need to do now is fully digest the Seer potion... I have the formula to the Clown potion, all I need to do now is fully digest the Seer potion...”

He muttered to himself repeatedly and then propped himself up.

Klein took a bronze coin from his pocket and quickly divined if it was suitable for him to head to the club today and got an definitive response.

“Five, four, three, two, one!”

After the countdown, he forced himself to stand up straight and walked over to the clothes rack before picking out his suit and hat.

...

In the meeting room of the Divination Club on Howes Street.

Klein sat down in a shaded corner and sipped on his Sibe black tea as he read the Tingen City Honest Paper. There weren't many members around him, just six or seven.

Just as he was laughing at the grammatical mistake used in a job advertisement, he saw a monocled Glacis walk in with a silk top hat in his hand. There was a blue-dressed lady in her thirties beside him.

The lady had curved eyebrows and large yet dull eyes. In her left hand, she was carrying an Intis hat decorated with the feathers of a black swan.

That hat is ridiculous. Wouldn't her neck be sore wearing that? Klein noted to himself. He looked over and massaged his glabella, as if alleviating his fatigue.

Through his Spirit Vision, he noticed that Glacis and the lady were both healthy, but were anxious, angry, and flustered.

"Good afternoon, Glacis. That Mr. Lanevus wasn't a trustworthy fellow, was he?" Klein asked with a smile, remaining seated.

Glacis had asked him for a divination about investing in Lanevus's steel company. Glacis had obtained a negative suggestion.

But noticing his indecisiveness, Klein believed that he had taken the risk anyway. Klein hoped the man hadn't invested everything he had. Thus, Klein immediately made the association and judgment when he saw the colors of his emotions.

Glacis froze for a moment, then let out a bitter smile.

"I truly regret not listening to the suggestion you divined for me. Heh, this is the second time I'm saying something like that, let's hope, no—I believe that there will not be a third time."

He turned his head and looked at the lady with some wrinkles.

"Madam Christina, look, Mr. Moretti had already guessed our motive for coming here without us even speaking. He is the most magical fortune-teller I have ever seen. I'm more than willing to describe him as a seer."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti. We have come here precisely because of Lanevus." Christina gave a simple bow, clearly anxious and flustered.

"Shall we head to Topaz?" Glacis was more collected. He pointed to the door of the meeting room with his chin.

Klein laughed as he got up.

"This is the job of a fortune-teller."

He followed the path to the empty Topaz room.

Glacis locked the wooden door and walked to his seat while sighing.

"Lanevus has gone missing. He gave the excuse of going to the Sivellaus County to oversee the excavation and left Tingen, never to return. We sent someone to look for him via steam locomotive and discovered that the large-scale steel mine he spoke of only existed on the map. Luckily for me, I recalled your advice and only invested a third of what I initially intended to invest.

Otherwise, I would have lost my family and my life."

Klein's pupils were darker than usual when he looked at the two people in front of him. He asked, a little curious, "Before making such a major financial decision, wouldn't you choose a representative and ascertain if whatever he said was true at the Hornacis mountain range in the Sivellaus County?"

Christina responded quickly, "Our representative was fooled, fooled by the people Lanevus employed, the place he rented, and the land that was fenced off."

Klein didn't question them any further. He maintained his attitude of a Seer and asked, "What do you wish to divine today?"

"We wish to see if this is salvageable or not," Christina said as she looked at Glacis.

Klein took a piece of paper and a fountain pen.

"Then let us do an astrolabe divination. I'll ask, and you'll answer."

Between the questions, Klein marked out the Thunderous constellation and the corresponding symbols of various situations before completing the astrolabe.

He used more elements in his astrolabe than an ordinary person would have. The method he was going to use to interpret the astrolabe was going to bring him closer to the truth.

"Madam, Sir, you are now at a crossroad. If you don't restrain yourselves and succumb to your greed and anxiety, you will fall further into the abyss, never being able to free yourselves. But if you can be patient and wait persistently without being greedy, then there will be an opportunity of you seeing the sunlight..." Klein said, his tone unhurried.

"I understand." Christina nodded. She thought for a moment before saying, "Mr. Moretti, can you divine Lanevus's whereabouts?"

"No, I don't think so. The information Lanevus left behind is most likely fake; even his name might not be real. How can I divine anything? Unless you can give me very specific details, or an item he carries with him all the time," Klein replied truthfully.

Christina fell silent for a moment before pushing a one-soli note toward Klein.

"I have heard from Glacis that you are a true seer, who is respectful and fearful of fate and not greedy for money. You can think of the rest as tips that I am giving to the club."

"Thank you for your confidence in me."

She stood up and bade farewell before leaving quickly.

Not greedy for money... No, I am a materialistic man! Klein was regretting his actions of acting as a charlatan.

Seeing Christina leave, Glacis closed the door and asked, "Is there really no way?"

"I told you the way just now." Klein smiled as he leaned back.

Glacis sighed. "Lanevus took off with over 10,000 pounds and his victims totaled over a hundred people. Luckily for me, I only lost 50 pounds. Those were my savings, and I have no debt. But Miss Christina invested 150 pounds. To her, this is not a sum that she can bear easily."

"Have you called the police?" Klein suddenly felt anger towards the cheat after hearing the sum of 10,000 pounds.

One could be considered rich even in Backlund with money like that.

I don't know if the police would enlist the help of the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind for a simple case like this... Klein thought, a little distracted.

Glacis nodded and said, "We've already made a police report. The police are paying a lot of attention to this case. After much discussion, we're willing to take out a portion of the money we would get back as a reward. One can get 10 pounds as a reward if they manage to provide clues about Lanevus's

whereabouts. If you can give a precise location and help the police catch Lanevus, you can get a reward of 100 pounds!"

10 pounds for a clue? 100 pounds for catching Lanevus? Klein's eyes nearly sparkled after he heard that. His breathing became heavy.

He happened to be worrying about how he was going to pay the detective in the future.

He could barely afford the second phase of the payment with the extra salary of three pounds he received this week, but if the private investigator managed to complete his mission within the next week, then he wouldn't have enough to pay off whatever he promised to pay. He would be lacking a few soli, provided that he wouldn't need to spend his savings elsewhere this week.

Perhaps the police will have some items belonging to Lanevus. But they won't be very useful if he's already left Tingen... Klein felt a mixture of excitement and disappointment.

In the next hour and a half, Klein got another two customers due to Angelica's recommendation. One was a divination for a oneyear-old toddler. Klein immediately drew the corresponding birth astrolabe and explained it, much to the satisfaction of his customer.

The other was searching for an item. Klein used tarot reading, coupled with dream divination, to give him a general area. This made his customer very shocked, for he had never seen a fortune-teller that could give him such accurate information.

Perhaps I could obtain enough funds just by doing divinations for others. Klein, who had received some tips, put on his hat, held his cane, and walked toward the exit of the club.

At this moment, he saw Christina enter the club once again with a young girl wearing a sunhat beside her.

Christina saw Klein and immediately approached him. She asked softly, "Mr. Moretti, you said that you could try divining Lanevus's whereabouts if there was something belonging to him?"

"That is correct." Klein nodded.

Christina heaved a sigh of relief and asked in a serious tone, "Then is his child something that belongs

to him?" *Huh?* Klein was momentarily a little lost.

Christina didn't notice the seer's blank look. She took a peek at Angelica over at the reception desk, lowered her voice, and said, "I mean Lanevus's child."

She extended her hand to point at the young lady with the sunhat and said, "This is my niece, Megose. Her mother is my elder sister. I'm very sorry and regretful that I thought Lanevus was an outstanding young man back then, and I introduced Megose to Lanevus, who was single. Then they became lovers.

"Megose's parents were happy with Lanevus at first too. They planned to pour all their savings into the steel company after they got engaged. Luckily, before that happened, Lanevus ran away. Their family didn't encounter any life-threatening losses. Unfortunately, my sister and brother-in-law have to explain to their relatives and friends why the engagement ceremony will be canceled, and they have to worry about the child that Megose is bearing.

"We believe in the God of Steam and Machinery; we are not believers of Lord of Storms. We don't believe in chastity before marriage. We don't blame Megose, and even pity her. However, the existence of the child does make things difficult, especially since he has such a father."

He took advantage of people both financially and sexually... Klein looked towards Megose who was standing quietly next to her. He then realized that the lady was quite a beauty.

She had a bright forehead, long blond hair, and a pair of big eyes just like Christina's. She looked depressed yet calm, and her lips were tightly pursed together.

What an infuriating swindler, and he even got away successfully... Klein cursed at Lanevus and said after some thought, "If it was a child that is already born, I do have a way to divine Lanevus's whereabouts using the child as an aid. But unfortunately, this would require us to wait a few months. Yes, this might be a reflection of the divination result earlier. Be patient and wait persistent without being greedy, then there will be an opportunity of seeing the sunlight."

"A few months..." Christina mumbled to herself as she shook her head. "No, after such a long period of time, even if we find Lanevus, we wouldn't be able to get back our money..."

She looked sideways at Megose. Her voice lowered unconsciously as she asked, "Do you have anything that Lanevus carried around before?"

"No," Megose answered clearly yet gently. "Would the ring he gave me count?"

"It must be something that he carried for a very long time." Klein shook his head.

Christina remained silent for a while and looked at Megose when she said, "You have to make a decision. I think keeping this child would make your future tough and thorny. Are you going to tell him that his father was a swindler and took away many people's money, including his mother's?

"Time to head to the clinic, to the hospital. Plus, this could help us to find Lanevus, to get what we lost."

Hey, isn't such divination a little hardcore? It was not Klein's place to involve himself in the family matters of others. So, he could only wait patiently by the side as he lampooned inwardly from time to time.

Megose lowered her head and looked down. She didn't speak for quite a while.

Then, she touched her stomach and revealed a gentle smile.

"He is different from his father. He will be a considerate and likable child.

"He will kick me lightly every day, telling me his mood. He will even hum a song, whistle and use music to help me sleep..." Klein heard and suddenly felt something amiss.

The former part of what Megose said seemed to be normal, but the latter part was like the ravings of a madwoman.

Did she have a mental problem due to the incident? Klein raised his right hand to his glabella. He pretended to massage it to ease his weariness.

Just then, Megose suddenly turned around and walked towards the door, leaving only one sentence.

"Maybe his father will come back in secret after he is born, keeping a part of the money for his child..."

Klein never expected she would respond like that, and he was momentarily taken aback that he forgot to activate his Spirit Vision. Then, he watched helplessly as Megose left the club and walked down the stairs.

Christina let out a sigh and said, "Sorry, Mr. Moretti. Sorry to bother you, we will look for one of Lanevus's personal items that he carried with him all the time."

Klein nodded indiscernibly. He watched her walk downstairs and sighed as he shook his head.

...

The next morning, Klein entered Blackthorn Security Company, greeted Rozanne, and asked, "Where's today's newspaper?"

The sweet brown-haired girl Rozanne sized him up and said, puzzled, "Klein, you're so weird."

"Why?" Klein asked in reply, smiling.

Rozanne rolled her eyes and said, "You always read the newspapers during noon break because you have mysticism lessons in the morning. Old Neil is already waiting for you in the armory!"

"I found out earlier that there would be a case offering a reward, so I want to read the newspaper to memorize the criminal's appearance. Perhaps I might one day come across the person?" Klein explained with a smile.

"Is that so?" Rozanne picked up the day's newspapers and started flipping through them out of curiosity. "Wanted... Lanevus, right?"

Klein immediately answered, "Yes."

"...Wicked swindler! He stole about ten thousand pounds!" Rozanne read carefully for nearly twenty seconds before cursing suddenly in rage.

Klein shared the same feeling.

"It's really ridiculous! Even I want to apply to take over the case!" Rozanne continued to read and

shook her head regretfully.

"The case doesn't seem to involve supernatural factors. Even if it did, it would be passed to Mandated Punishers under the Lord of Storms."

Klein didn't quite understand what Rozanne meant, but after he took the newspaper and read it, he sighed.

"Yeah, there were so many people cheated. There must be believers from all three major churches, and Lanevus's steelwork company was said to be located in the South."

If a case was related to supernatural factors and involved only the believer of one God, it would be passed to the corresponding team. However, if it involved believers of the Evernight Goddess, Lord of Storms, and the God of Steam and Machinery, it would be assigned based on jurisdiction area. The

Nighthawks controlled the Golden Indus Borough, the North Borough, and the West Borough. The Mandated Punishers controlled the East Borough, South Borough, and the port, while the Machinery Hivemind troop was responsible for the university and suburb areas.

As he flipped through the newspapers, Klein memorized Lanevus's appearance,

He had a plump forehead, black hair, brown eyes, and a pair of spectacles with almost round lenses. He smirked faintly, looking as though he was mocking everyone.

Besides that pair of spectacles, Lanevus didn't seem to have any obvious traits, and looked really ordinary.

He chatted with Rozanne casually then passed through the partition, in preparation to head underground.

Then, he saw the pale and cold Corpse Collector Frye and the white-haired black-eyed author Seeka Tron exiting the recreation room and turning towards him.

After a simple greeting, Klein watched his two teammates leave and discovered Dunn Smith in a black trench coat standing by the side of the door he opened.

"There's a case?" Klein asked curiously.

At that time of day, there wouldn't be two Nighthawks heading out together for no reason.

Dunn looked over with his gray eyes. He nodded and smiled.

"There seems to be a paranormal incident in West Borough. I've sent Seeka and Frye to check on it, but you don't have to worry about that. Until you master combat techniques, I don't intend to send you on any missions. I have to take responsibility for my team members."

Captain, you are such a nice person. Besides the receding hairline and bad memory, you are flawless...

Klein complimented inwardly. He asked for confirmation, "In other words, I only need to attend mysticism classes and combat training. I don't have to contribute anything, and I can still get my pay?"

"This is only temporary," Dunn confirmed.

I only need to 'attend classes' and 'work out', and I'll get an ample paycheck. It's great just thinking about it... Klein thought happily.

I hope there are no more coincidences! He prayed in silence.

...

The days passed by peacefully until Friday. Klein completed his combat training and took a carriage back to Besik Street.

Outside Henry's Private Detective Company, he looked to the left and to the right. Confirmed that no one was watching him, he put on the gauze mask, lifted up the collar of his trench coat, and quickly entered the stairway.

Knocking on the door, Klein saw the middle-aged brawny man, Detective Henry, again.

"Good afternoon, sir. One of the cases that you entrusted us with is done." The deep blue-eyed Detective Henry spoke with a hoarse voice from drinking and smoking.

Klein intentionally lowered his voice and said, "Is it the information of the man that appeared at the Evil Dragon Bar?"

The man that bought the Spectator potion's supplementary ingredients...

"Yes." Henry waved his smoking pipe.

Then, he didn't say anything but look at Klein with a smile.

Klein understood what the man meant, and he took out four one-pound notes and handed it over.

“This is the second payment.”

He paused and added, “Write me a receipt.”

His private stash of money had been reduced to less than one pound...

“No problem.” Henry coughed. He checked the anticounterfeiting marks on the notes as he instructed his staff to bring over pen and paper.

Then, he beckoned to Klein for him to have a seat while he quickly wrote a receipt and stamped a seal on the bottom.

After completing everything, Henry took a puff at his pipe and said, “According to your description, my assistant and I waited at the Evil Dragon Bar for three days before finally meeting that man.

“He’s quite an alert gentleman, and is good at observation. Thankfully, we’re experienced...

“His name is Daxter Guderian, a doctor of the Greenhill Mental Asylum.”

Daxter Guderian, a doctor of the Greenhill Mental Asylum...

Klein silently repeated what the detective had said and started to think about the ways he could interact with this doctor whom he suspected to be a Spectator from the Psychology Alchemists.

He didn't want to take too much of a risk on this matter. He didn't want the Nighthawks to discover that he was problematic. He didn't want to lose the life he had now over a mere exchange of information and resources.

Furthermore, this person was most probably a Spectator. Anyone who hadn't undergone special training wouldn't be able to hide their motives and thoughts from a person like that.

I'll get a proxy, making me appear a little more mysterious? No, the more people involved, the easier it is for there to be problems... Yes... perhaps I can hide the truth within the truth. I'll let that doctor know of my thoughts and feelings through my expression and body language, but not the whole truth...

As Detective Henry described Daxter Guderian, Klein thought about what methods he could use to minimize risk without affecting the results he wanted.

Slowly, he found inspiration in a detective film he had once seen.

Well, I can try that, but I'll have to practice it repeatedly... Klein nodded inwardly before directing his full concentration on what Detective Henry had to say.

Cough... Henry cleared his throat and said, "We are still working on the request involving the red chimney. You should know that there are many buildings in Tingen that have similar characteristics. Of course, it would be much easier if you could provide us with more clues." Klein laughed dryly.

"I wouldn't have had to make the request if I had more clues."

Honestly, this long investigation had depressed him, for the person behind the scenes had obviously noticed Klein's divinations and had more than enough time to find another hideout.

Thus, all he could do was hope that he could find relevant clues from the information of the tenants.

And that alone cost seven pounds... Just the thought of it made him feel the pinch... Klein grabbed his cane and left after Detective Henry finished his report.

...

At twenty minutes to nine on a Saturday morning, in an office of the Greenhill Mental Asylum.

Daxter Guderian, who was wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, removed his jacket and hat and hung them on the clothes rack.

He had just picked up his tin of coffee powder when he heard knocking on the door.

"Please come in," Daxter said casually.

The half-closed door opened, and a young man wearing a black trench coat entered.

Daxter didn't recognize the person that walked in, so he asked, puzzled, "Good morning, you are?"

Klein closed the door, took off his hat, and pressed it against his chest before bowing.

"Good morning, Doctor Daxter, please forgive me for taking the liberty to visit without any warning. I am Probationary Inspector Klein Moretti of the Awwa Police Department. These are my identification documents and badge."

"Inspector?" Daxter muttered softly as he received Klein's identification documents and badge.

“Special Operations Department...” He looked up slowly, his eyes calm, as if he was scrutinizing something.

Short black hair, pupils slightly darker than brown, a scholarly aura, no ill intent at the moment...

Daxter returned the items and pointed to the chair on the other side of the table.

“Please have a seat, Officer. How might I assist you?”

Klein sat down and placed his cane to the side. He slowly put away his documents and badge, then smiled.

“Please allow me to reintroduce myself.

“I am also a member of Tingen City’s Nighthawks team, specializing in dealing with incidents involving the supernatural.

“Good morning, Mr. Spectator.”

Before he finished his sentence, he wasn’t surprised to see Daxter’s pupils constrict. Daxter retracted his hand, looking like he was about to escape.

“Officer, I don’t understand what you mean.” Daxter forced out a few words, almost unable to maintain his form. “I don’t like jokes like this. Perhaps I should call security.”

Klein slowly took out his revolver from his underarm holster, his smile unchanging.

“Mr. Daxter, I know that you can see my confidence and that I do not have any ill intent. Heh heh, honestly speaking, I wasn’t too sure myself, but your reaction gave me the answer I needed.”

Every sentence I said just now is true... Klein added in his heart.

Daxter relaxed slightly, his gaze shooting toward the revolver. He asked, confused, “I find it hard to understand why you came looking for me... I don’t think that I revealed anything...”

Klein laughed and replied, “It was just a coincidence, or perhaps fate wanted us to meet.

“We ran into each other once in the underground market at Evil Dragon Bar, but you didn’t notice me back then.

“You were smart to purchase the supplementary ingredients for the potion first, but since I am familiar with that formula, you caught my attention.”

Daxter suddenly exhaled, as if he just lost the motivation to defend himself.

“I see...

“I thought I was careful enough, to think that, to think that...”

After muttering to himself, he looked into Klein’s eyes and said, “Officer, I know that you’re not here to arrest me. What is your true motive for being here?”

With a relaxed expression, Klein said, “I am different from the other Nighthawks. I don’t believe that Beyonders not within our ranks are criminals in the making. This is not fair to those who adhere to the law.”

Daxter changed his posture. He loosened up and said, “The world would be at peace if the other Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind acted like you.”

“You know of other members from the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind?” Klein feigned surprise. “This is not something a person who became a Beyonder by mistake should know. There must be an organization behind you.”

He leaned back and said with a smile, “Psychology Alchemists?”

He casually watched Daxter’s expression contort as he said those words.

“I could see that you were anticipating my answer, yet I still missed the bait and fell into your linguistic trap...” Daxter said in frustration.

He started to notice that the Spectator state wasn’t omnipotent. He could tell why the other party was here, but it didn’t mean he understood the specifics.

Klein stroked the cylinder of his revolver and said, “Doctor, we need to have an honest conversation. That can start with me.

“I don’t believe that Beyonders not under management are potential criminals, but I agree that every Beyonder must be registered and monitored. This is a precaution against the risk of Beyonders losing control. It’s to avoid the occurrence of something even more dangerous.

“I won’t disrupt your normal life, but I hope that there can be limited cooperation between us.”

“Limited cooperation?” Daxter asked, as if thinking about something.

Klein let out a soft chuckle.

“Yes, limited.

“For example, tell me about your condition regularly. You should know that it is possible to save someone who has not completely lost control yet, and the Nighthawks have considerable experience in this regard.

“Or, if you could give me clues of a Beyonder you know, or a Beyonder in your organization who is about to do something that can endanger the innocent.

“Or, if you would like to exchange something for items that you could make more use of. This is a perk I am giving you. You should know what perks mean.

“Also, you need not worry about being suddenly prosecuted by members of the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind one day. You can live your life in joy and stability.

“We will give you something you can use to prove your identity. You can use it when you have no other options left.”

Daxter listened on silently. It was a while before he said, “You want me to betray my organization?”

“No, not betray,” Klein said sincerely. “This is the protection of justice, morals, and kindness. You are stopping something evil, merciless, and bloody. Other than that, I wouldn’t ask you to betray the secrets of the organization you are in.”

Daxter thought for a moment, as if feeling better now that there was an excuse.

He was silent for a few seconds before he extended his right hand.

“Here’s to a successful cooperation.”

Klein shook his hand with his free hand and said, “A successful cooperation.”

He paused for a moment before chuckling.

“Doctor, can you now tell me if you are a member of the Psychology Alchemists?” “Yes.” Daxter nodded.

Klein, who hadn’t deactivated his Spirit Vision since he entered, didn’t see any changes in the colors of his emotions. Thus he asked discreetly, “How did you join the Psychology Alchemists?”

Daxter looked into his eyes and said, “I discovered that there was a patient of this asylum who could see right through me when I was tending to him. His clear mind was nothing like a lunatic...

“His name is Hood Eugen.”

Klein committed the name to memory and chatted with Daxter a little longer, deciding on a secret way to communicate and meet up.

He didn't exchange matters regarding potions, formulas, and rumors for the time being. At an appropriate moment, he bade farewell and put away his revolver before leaving Daxter's office.

Daxter exhaled after he saw Klein's back disappear from his field of vision. He slumped into his chair, feeling a little agonized and little relaxed.

...

36 Zouteland Street. Inside Blackthorn Security Company.

Seated behind his desk, Dunn swept the area with his gray eyes and asked, "What happened?"

Klein, who was late by about half an hour, organized his thoughts and said, "Captain, I found a Beyonder and confirmed that he is a member of the Psychology Alchemists.

"He's an orthodox doctor and is willing to cooperate with us. I think it's best to maintain the status quo. He could help us learn more about the current condition of the Association of Psychological Alchemy."

After pausing for a few seconds, Klein added, "I want to develop him into an informant for the Nighthawks, or a hidden external member."

The word 'informant' came from the Intis language. It was created by Emperor Roselle.

Dunn nodded slowly and said, "You handled the situation well, but it would be best to inform me when you face such a situation in the future.

"Give me that doctor's information and a written account of the way you handled the situation. I will give him something he can use to prove his identity.

"Also, don't speak of this to Leonard and the rest. Even though they are trustworthy teammates, the protocol clearly requires us to keep this close.

"You will be in charge of contacting that doctor in the future."

Klein exhaled silently and replied with a smile, "Alright."

CHAPTER 118: AUGUST

Time flew by and Tingen bade farewell to the end of summer. The temperature hovered between twenty-six and twenty-seven degrees Celsius.

Whoosh!

Klein stood up from the bathtub and took a stride forward, sending water droplets to the floor.

He stood there naked, looking down at his abs. He flexed and saw prominent muscle lines appear.

That was the result of his daily training. Besides, he appeared a lot more energetic.

And just today, his combat teacher, Gawain had started teaching him the basic footwork for punching and the techniques for delivering force.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein stepped on the floor barefooted in the bathroom, either sliding forward or retreating before dodging to the right and swinging his fist while he made a defensive gesture.

Phew. He stopped and let out a breath happily. He took the towel next to him and wiped himself down.

After getting in touch with Daxter Guderian, the doctor in the mental asylum, Klein seemed to escape from coincidences for two whole weeks. Without the constant barrage of supernatural incidents, his life became stable. He received his paycheck on time, researched mysticism in-depth, trained his marksmanship and fighting skills, developed new cooking recipes, slowly gathered decent utensils and decorations with Benson and Melissa, asked his teammates about supernatural cases in the past, divined for people who came to the club, and strictly followed the principles he figured out.

That made him more stable. If it wasn't for the late nights in which he still missed Earth, the red chimney that had yet to be uncovered, or the Misfortune Cloth Puppet's picture that still appeared in his dreams occasionally, he would've started getting used to his current life and think of it affectionately.

During that time, three Tarot Club Gatherings were convened, but Klein didn't receive any new pages of Roselle's diary. However, according to Justice's explanation, she had gotten to know two Beyonders and she was getting in touch with them consistently. When she got into their circle of acquaintances, it was likely that she could trade for more pages of Roselle's diary.

The Hanged Man also expressed that he had returned to land and was dealing with some matters. He would begin looking for more as soon as he had more free time.

Besides, Justice felt that the two Beyonders whom she knew were potential targets to join the Gathering. They both had decent identities as cover, with certain but different channels of information, as well as principles and unique characteristics. They were not the kind of people that would sell out a secret. The only problem was that they were only Sequence 9 Beyonders, which wasn't too suitable for a high-end secret organization like the Tarot Club.

High-end secret organization? Sounds more like a pyramid scheme... Klein only let out a heavy sigh to cover up the fact that he was at a loss for words to reply to Miss Justice's complacency. He could only agree to observe the two Beyonders further.

Of course, Justice wasn't the innocent and romantic maiden from before. She kept her guard up and never mentioned the names and traits of the two Beyonders. She was afraid that The Hanged Man would be able to identify her through that.

Miss Justice said that she clearly feels the signs of the potion digesting. She might need another three to four weeks until she completes her acting as a Spectator. My scheduled acquisition of the Telepathist formula has to be brought forward... Klein threw aside the towel that he used to dry himself and put on his clothes as he thought about the Tarot Club from the day before.

In the last twenty days, he had only met Daxter Guderian once. He had the idea of haste makes waste, so he merely chatted about the doctor's state and asked unimportant matters about the Psychology Alchemists.

Given the speed with which Justice was digesting the potion, he had no choice but to begin thinking about how to get the formula of Sequence 8 Telepathist from Daxter earlier.

Klein buttoned his shirt and took another dry towel to wrap around his head to absorb the water in his hair.

Compared to Justice, he was digesting the Seer potion even faster than expected. By this week, the sounds that he shouldn't hear and things that he shouldn't see had already vanished while engaging in Cogitation or Spirit Vision.

Flipping over the towel, Klein dried his hair again. He lifted his head to look at the door and muttered to himself, "The Seer principles that I've figured out are really efficient. Next week... I should be able to digest the potion entirely by next week. I have no idea where to get the single horn of a matured Hornacis gray mountain goat and a complete stalk of a human-faced rose required by the Clown formula... Maybe I could do as Lady Daly did and send in a special application? But that would definitely attract the attention of the higher-ups, and I want to develop at my own pace. The believer from the Aurora Order in the police department was found too, but I have yet to find out who this

Mr. Z is...

"Henry said that he would complete the red chimney task before the end of this week. My private stash of money has returned to slightly more than seven pounds, so at least I don't have to worry about making the final payment...

"Some of the information on houses and tenants that he provided before didn't seem to have any abnormalities, but I have no time to investigate them one by one...

"Perhaps I could see which red chimney houses have gotten new tenants recently?

"Hmm, that's one way to look at it."

...

Sitting silently for another half a minute, he put on his black trousers, bow tie, and underarm holster. He then picked up his sweaty knight training suit from the floor and tossed it into the laundry basket. He opened the door and exited the bathroom. He had just finished his Wednesday afternoon combat training, and he was still at his teacher Gawain's place.

"Hello, Mr. Moretti." Gawain's maidservant happened to pass by, and she quickly bowed.

Klein nodded slightly and pointed at the messy bathroom.

"Could you clean this up, please?"

"Of course, sir. The clothes will be taken care of by the laundry maid. She'll come over at six." The maidservant held her head low when she answered.

Laundry maids had no accommodation or food included, so they weren't hired by only one household. They were normally contracted to handle the laundry from several households. Either they rushed around daily, washing one household's clothes before going to the next, or they would gather all the clothes from different households and take care of it all at the same time, before sending it all back. Only then could they barely make a living.

Klein didn't say much but returned to the living room to bid farewell to the owner who was sitting on the rocking chair.

He saw Gawain nodding lethargically, a light brown blanket covering his legs and the Awwa Evening News in his hands.

Klein knew for a fact that the gentleman bathing in the setting sun's glow was in his early fifties, but his listlessness made him seem like he was already in his eighties.

During combat training, Gawain maintained silence and only give pointers when he needed to. He wasn't one for casual chatting. Klein was so exhausted from the daily training that he had no intention of trying to engage in conversation. Thus, their relationship remained distant.

From his demonstrations, Teacher Gawain's strength is still quite terrifying, and his steps are swift too. I reckon it wouldn't be a problem for him to fight three of me... He has the pay from the police station, and he also bought a plot of land in a village out in the Tingen suburbs that provides a fixed rental... He hires a chef, a maidservant, and a laundry maiden... In the Foodaholic Empire on Earth, a man in his fifties with such wealth would have been traveling the world...

Klein looked away from Gawain and shook his head. Then, he went to the clothes rack to take down his top hat and black trench coat.

After he tidied himself up, he took his cane and exited the house. He walked along the weed-covered stone path towards the gates.

Just then, he saw that there was a two-wheeled carriage stopped outside the metal fence, and there was a man with a familiar face standing next to it.

"Leonard?" Klein muttered, looking suspiciously towards his messy-haired Nighthawks teammate.

Leonard was dressed in a white shirt, black trousers, and buttonless leather boots as he twirled his hat in his hands. When he saw Klein come out from the house, he smiled and asked, "Are you pleasantly surprised?"

Only surprise, without any joy... Klein ignored Leonard's inappropriate behavior and looked into the fake poet's green eyes.

"What happened?"

Leonard put on his hat and said, "Captain wants you to work with me and Frye. Let's talk about it on the way." "Alright." Klein followed him into the carriage.

As the scene outside of the carriage flew past, Leonard took up the document bag by his side and threw it at Klein.

Klein caught it steadily and took out a document. He then started reading carefully.

"August 11th, 11pm, at a workhouse in West Borough, the bankrupt Salus attempted arson to cause a tragedy. But in the end, he only managed to burn himself to death..."

"August 11th, 10pm, harbor worker, Zid jumped into the Tussock River and ended his poverty-stricken life..."

"August 11th, 8pm, in Iron Cross Street's Lower Street, Mrs. Lauwis who earned a living by selling matchboxes died of a sudden disease..."

...

Klein was puzzled when he read the first two incidents. He found the deaths very ordinary and common. Not only should it have been beneath the attention of the Nighthawks, even the police force would avoid wasting resources looking into such obvious causes of death.

However, when he read down the list, he slowly creased his eyebrows.

After two pages, he suddenly lifted his head and looked at Leonard.

"Isn't this too many?"

When the number of ordinary deaths reached a staggering amount, it was difficult to call it normal.

For once, Leonard nodded seriously and said, “The number of death incidents within the past two weeks are five times the normal rate.

“When the Tingen Police headquarters tabulated the data, they realized the problem and quickly passed it over to us, as well as the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind.

“Although these death incidents appeared normal during initial investigations, Captain believes we should investigate them once more. It might require the help of divination or ritualistic magic.”

Klein said with a look of enlightenment, “I understand.”

Leonard snapped his fingers and said, “You, me, and Frye are in a team. He’s waiting for us at Iron Cross Street’s Lower Street. Seeka, Royale, and Old Neil are in another team, investigating corresponding incidents in the North Borough. Captain is staying in the security company to respond to any emergencies.”

“Okay.” Klein nodded solemnly and suddenly thought of something. He quickly asked, “Can I drop by my place and leave a note?”

He had to tell his brother and sister that he couldn’t dine at home that night because something has cropped up.

Leonard laughed.

“No problem, it’s on the way.”

With that, Klein calmed down and read over the death incidents again, intending to find a link among the various names, times, and causes of death.

Then, he suddenly realized something.

Is this my first group mission after becoming a Nighthawk?

Tingen City, 2 Daffodil Street.

Klein, who had left a note, locked the door and walked briskly towards Leonard Mitchell who was waiting by the side of the road.

Leonard's short black hair had grown a little over the month, and the lack of any grooming made it look messy.

Despite that, his messy hair still complimented his decent looks, emerald-colored eyes, and poetic vibes. It exuded a different sense of beauty.

Indeed, any hairstyle depends on the face... Klein lampooned inwardly. He pointed in the direction of Iron Cross Street and asked, "Is Frye waiting for us there?"

"Yes." Leonard smoothed his untucked shirt and said casually, "Did you notice any clues when you were looking at the documents?"

Klein held his cane in his left hand as he walked along the side of the road and said, "No, I cannot find anything common in their times, locations, or causes of death. You should know that any rituals involving evil gods or devils must be conducted within a certain time frame or using a special method."

Leonard touched the custom-made revolver hidden underneath his shirt, by his waist and chuckled.

"That isn't an absolute rule. In my experience, some evil gods or devils are easily satisfied, as long as they have a particular interest in what is being asked of them.

"Also, a good number of the deaths seem normal. We have to omit them before we can arrive at the real answer."

Klein glanced at him and said, "That's why the Captain asked us to investigate once more. To eliminate the normal incidents."

"Leonard, your tone and description tell me that you have considerable experience in this area, but you have only been a member of the Nighthawks for four years, with an average of two supernatural incidents a month. Furthermore, a large number of those were simple and easy to solve."

He always felt that Leonard Mitchell was a little weird and mysterious. Not only was he always suspicious of him, believing that there was something about him. In addition, his demeanor also changed from time to time, sometimes quiet, sometimes arrogant, sometimes flippant, sometimes staid.

"Could it be that you've also had a fortuitous encounter? An encounter that makes you view yourself as a star in a play?" Klein made a rough deduction based on all the movies, novels, and dramas he had watched in the past.

Upon hearing this question, Leonard laughed and said, "That's because you're not a full-fledged Nighthawk yet. You're still in the training phase.

"The Holy Cathedral compiles a record of all supernatural encounters experienced by cathedrals of the different dioceses and hands it down to its members once every six months.

"Aside from your mysticism lessons, you can submit an application to the Captain and request to enter Chanis Gate to read these records."

Klein nodded in enlightenment.

"The Captain has never mentioned this to me."

Klein hadn't had the opportunity to enter Chanis Gate up to this point.

Leonard chuckled and said, "I thought that you were already used to the Captain's style. To think that you are still naively waiting for him to remind you..."

Upon saying that, he added meaningfully, “We must be cautious of the Captain if there ever comes a day when he remembers everything.”

Would that mean a loss of control? Klein nodded, his expression serious. He then asked, “Is the forgetfulness unique to the Captain? I had thought that it was a problem brought about by the Sleepless Sequence.”

Burning the midnight oil usually leads to memory loss...

“More accurately, it’s a symptom unique to a Nightmare. With dreams and reality intertwined, it’s often hard for a person to differentiate between what is real and what isn’t. They need to remember what isn’t part of reality...” Leonard wanted to elaborate further, but they had already arrived at Iron Cross Street and found Corpse Collector Frye waiting for them at the public carriage station.

Frye was wearing a round black hat and a trench coat of a similar color with a leather briefcase in his hand. He was so pale that it made Klein suspect if he would soon collapse at anytime. His icy aura made everyone else waiting for the carriage keep their distance from him.

After nodding to each other, the three grouped up silently and walked past the Smyrin Bakery before turning onto the Lower Street of Iron Cross Street.

They were immediately faced with a din. Merchants selling clam soup, seared fish, ginger beer, and fruits were shouting hysterically for attention, causing the pedestrians to involuntarily slow down.

It was already a little past five. People were returning to Iron Cross Street, and the sides of the streets were becoming crowded. Some children were mixed in the crowd, coldly watching everything, placing their attention on the pockets of the pedestrians.

Klein frequently came here for cheap cooked food and was familiar with the streets, especially since he had lived in a nearby apartment in the past. He reminded the group, “Be careful of thieves.”

Leonard smiled. “You need not mind them.”

He pulled on his shirt and adjusted the holster of his gun, revealing his revolver.

Suddenly, all the gazes fixed on them shifted away. The pedestrians around them instinctively made way.

Klein froze for a moment, then caught up to Leonard and Frye with large steps. He lowered his head, trying hard to avoid being noticed by anyone he knew.

Benson and Melissa still had dealings with the neighbors here. After all, they hadn’t moved too far away.

The three made their way past the area that was had many peddlers and turned into the true Lower Street of Iron Cross Street.

The pedestrians here were all dressed in old, ragged clothes. They were cautious of strangers wearing bright and beautiful clothes; yet, there was also greed in their eyes, like vultures eyeing a meal, waiting to strike at any time. But Leonard’s revolver prevented any accidents from happening.

“Let’s first investigate the death from yesterday. We’ll begin with Mrs. Lauwis, a lady who glued matchboxes together for a living.” Leonard flipped his notes and pointed to a place not far away,

“First floor, No. 134...”

As the three of them walked forward, children who were playing in the streets and dressed in shabby clothes quickly hid by the corner of the road. They observed them with eyes full of curiosity and fear.

“Look at their arms and legs, thin as matchsticks.” Leonard sighed. He entered building No. 134 first.

Air that was a mixture of numerous scents entered Klein’s nostrils. He could faintly detect the stench of urine, sweat, and mold, as well as the smell of burning coal.

Klein couldn't help but pinch his nose. He then saw Bitsch Mountbatten who had been waiting there for them.

Officer Mountbatten had a brownish-yellow mustache and was envious of Leonard's rank of inspector.

"Sir, I have already asked Lauwis to wait in his room," Bitsch Mountbatten said with his unique, shrill voice.

He clearly didn't recognize Klein, who now looked more energized and proper. All he cared about was sucking up to the three officers in front of him as he led them to the Lauwis family on the first floor.

It was a simple apartment. There was a bunk bed laid upright inside the room and a desk filled with glue and hard paper on the right side. The corner of the room was piled full of frames for matchboxes, while an old cabinet sat on the left, acting as a storage space for both clothes and cutlery.

A stove, toilet, and a small amount of coal and timber occupied the two sides of the door, while the center of the room was occupied by two dirty mattresses. A man was sleeping under a torn blanket, leaving no space for anyone to walk.

A lady lay on the lower level of the bunk bed, her skin ice cold. It was clear that she had lost all signs of life.

Beside the corpse sat a man in his thirties. He had oily hair, looked dispirited, and his eyes had lost their luster.

"Lauwis, these three officers are here to examine the body and ask you questions," Bitsch Mountbatten shouted, without any regard for the sleeping man.

The dispirited man looked up weakly and asked in surprise, "Didn't someone already examine the corpse and question me?"

He was dressed in a grayish-blue worker's uniform which had visible signs of being mended multiple times.

"Answer when I tell you to! Why do you have so many questions?" Bitsch Mountbatten berated the man, then turned to Leonard, Klein, and Frye. "Officers, this is Lauwis. The person on the bed is his wife, who is also the deceased. According to our preliminary analysis, she died from a sudden illness."

Klein and the rest tiptoed to the edge of the bed.

The high-nosed, thin-lipped Frye did not say anything with his cold demeanor. Instead, he patted Lauwis gently, signaling for the man to make way so that he could examine the body.

Klein looked at the sleeping man and asked, "This is?"

"M-my tenant." Lauwis rubbed his forehead as he said, "The rent for this room is three soli ten pence a week. I'm only a worker at the harbor, and my wife made two and a quarter pence per crate of glued matchboxes. Each crate h-has, up to 130 boxes. We, we also have a child. We can only rent the rest of the space to someone else. We only charge a soli a week for the mattress..."

"I have a tenant who's helping out at the theater, and he's not back before 10 at night. He sold his rights to the mattress in the daytime to t-this man. He's the person who watches over the gate of the theater at night, so he only pays six pence every week..."

Hearing the other party stammer as he explained, Klein couldn't help but look at the crate in the corner of the room.

One crate had 130 matchboxes and only earned them 2.25 pence, about the cost of two pounds of black bread... How many crates could she manage a day [1]*?*

Leonard surveyed the surroundings and asked, "Was your wife acting abnormally prior to her death?"

Lauwis, who had been asked similar questions, pointed to the left side of his left chest and said, “From last week, well— perhaps the week before, she said that she felt stuffy in this area and couldn’t catch her breath.”

The precursor to a heart condition? A normal death? Klein interrupted, “Did you see how she died?”

Lauwis recalled, “She stopped working after sunset. Candles and gas are more expensive than matchboxes... She said that she was very tired and asked me to talk to the kids and let her rest. When I saw her again, she had a-already stopped breathing.”

Lauwis could no longer hide his grief and pain when he said that.

Klein and Leonard asked several questions, but could not find anything unnatural about the death.

After they looked at each other, Leonard said, “Mr. Lauwis, please wait outside for a few minutes. We are going to conduct a thorough examination of the corpse. I don’t think that you’ll want to see that.”

“Alright.” Lauwis stood up anxiously.

Bitsch Mountbatten walked toward the mattress and kicked the tenant, violently chasing him out of the apartment. He then closed the door and guarded the room from the outside.

“So?” Leonard looked at Frye.

“She died of a heart attack,” Frye said with certainty, retracting his hands.

Klein thought for a moment before taking out a half-penny, intending to do a quick judgment.

“Mrs. Lauwis’s heart attack was due to supernatural causes?” No, that is too narrow, the answer might be misleading... Hmm, “There are supernatural factors influencing Mrs Lauwis’s death.” I’ll use that! He quickly decided on a statement.

As he recited the statement, Klein made his way to the side of Mrs Lauwis’s corpse. His eyes turned darker as he tossed the coin.

The sound of the coin reverberated around the room as it fell, straight into Klein’s palm.

This time, the portrait of the king was facing up.

This meant that there were supernatural factors influencing Mrs. Lauwis’s death!

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1. During the Victorian era, a crate is 144 matchboxes. The labor was worth 2.25 pence. A woman who works the entire day can do at most 7 crates.

"There is the presence of supernatural factors..." Klein's eyes returned to normal, and he looked at Leonard and Frye.

Leonard suddenly chuckled.

"Very professional, and deserving of the title of Seer."

Are you trying to hint at something... Klein muttered in his head.

Frye opened his suitcase and took out a silver knife and other tools. He paused and asked, "The corpse tells me that she really died of a sudden heart attack. Do you have any way to divine a more detailed answer?"

Klein nodded seriously and said, "I can attempt to combine a mediumship ritual and a dream divination. Hopefully, I'll be able to obtain something from Mrs. Lauwis's remaining spirituality."

Frye maintained his cold and reserved state. He took two steps back and said, "Give it a try."

He turned his head sideways and looked at Klein. He suddenly sighed without much fluctuation in his tone. "You're getting more and more used to this kind of situation."

It's not like I wanted it... Klein had an urge to cry. He then took out the bottles of extracts, essential oils, and herbal powder.

Then, he quickly set up the mediumship ritual.

He chanted the honored titles of the Evernight Goddess in the middle of the spirituality wall and recited

his prayers in Hermes. Soon, wind spun around him and the light grew dimmer.

Klein's eyes turned entirely black, and he repeated the divination statement, "The cause of Mrs. Lauwis's death.

"The cause of Mrs. Lauwis's death."

...

He entered the dreamland whilst standing and 'saw' a translucent spirit lingering around the corpse.

Then, he extended his illusory right hand to touch Mrs. Lauwis's remaining spirituality.

In an instance, light burst out in front of him as scenes flashed past, one after another.

There was a skinny and sallow lady dressed in ragged clothes, busily making matchboxes.

She suddenly paused and held her chest.

She was speaking to her two children.

Her body wavered as she gasped for air.

She was buying black bread when someone suddenly patted her.

She was having the symptoms of a heart attack again and again.

She was feeling weary and got into bed, but she never woke up ever again.

Klein observed every single detail, intending to look for a trace of the supernatural factor. But when everything ended, he still hadn't gained any clues. As the blurriness shattered, Klein left the dreamland and returned to reality.

He dispelled the wall of spirituality and said to the waiting Frye and amused Leonard,

“There were no direct symptoms. Most of the scenes revealed that Mrs. Lauwis had a heart ailment a long time ago. The only scene that was different was when Mrs. Lauwis was patted on the back by someone. The hand was fair and slender, apparently a woman’s.”

“For such a family, they wouldn’t go to a doctor unless they’re very, very sick. Even if they were to queue at a free charity hospital, time is not something they can afford to lose. A day without work might mean no food on the table the next day.” Leonard sighed emotionally like a poet.

Frye looked at the corpse on the bed and sighed lightly.

Before Klein spoke, Leonard quickly got out of his pensive state and said thoughtfully, “Are you implying that the supernatural factor came into play when Mrs. Lauwis was patted? It came from the slender hand of a lady or madam?”

Klein nodded and replied, “Yes, but this is merely my interpretation. Divination is always unclear.”

The conversation ended. He and Leonard stepped back to the other side of the bed and allowed Frye to take out his tools from his suitcase without any disturbance, so he could do a further examination.

After Frye was done, they waited as he packed up his tools. After cleaning up and covering the corpse, he turned around and said, “Her death was caused by a natural heart disease. There’s no doubt about it.”

Upon hearing the conclusion, Leonard paced back and forth. He even walked to the side of the door, paused for quite a while before saying, “That’s it for now. Let’s head over to the workhouse in West Borough. We’ll see if we can find other clues. Maybe we can link the two incidents together.”

“Okay, we can only hope,” Klein agreed, still filled with puzzlement.

Frye picked up his suitcase and while skipping and walking, he carefully went across the two floor mattresses without stepping on anyone’s blanket.

Leonard opened the door and walked out of the room first. He told Lauwis and the tenant, “You can return home now.”

Klein thought for a moment before adding, “Don’t be in a hurry to bury the body. Wait for another day, as there might be one more thorough examination.”

“A-alright, Officer.” Lauwis bowed lightly and replied in a hurry. Then, feeling numbed and lost, he said, “A-actually, I... I don’t have the money to bury her just yet. I have to save for another few days, just a few more days. Luckily, the weather is turning cold.”

Klein was shocked and asked, “You plan on letting the corpse remain in the room for a few days?”

Lauwis forced a smile and replied, “Yea, thankfully, the weather became colder recently. I can move the body onto the table at night. When we eat, I can carry her to the bed...”

Before he finished what he had to say, Frye suddenly

interrupted, “I’ve left you money for the burial next to your wife.”

After saying those words in absolute calmness, he exited the apartment directly, unbothered by Lauwis’s shocked expression and gratitude that followed.

Klein followed closely and thought of a question.

If the weather was still as hot as June or July, how would Lauwis deal with his wife’s corpse?

Pick a very dark night with strong winds, throw the corpse into the Tussock River or the Khoy River? Or just dig a hole and bury her?

Klein knew that the law requiring a cemetery burial had been established more than a thousand years ago, at the end of the previous Epoch. The seven major churches and imperial households from each

country had approved the law in order to cut down on the number of water ghosts, zombies, and restless wraiths.

Each country provided free land, while each church was in charge of keeping watch and patrolling. They only charged minimum fees for cremation and burial in order to pay for the necessary labor force.

But even so, the truly poor still couldn't afford it.

After leaving 134 Iron Cross Street at Lower Street, the three Nighthawks and Bitsch Mountbatten parted ways. Silently, they took a turn to the nearby workhouse in West Borough.

As they got closer, Klein saw a long queue. It was just like when the people from the Foodaholic Empire on earth queued for a shop that gone viral on the Internet. The place was packed.

"There's about a hundred, no, closer to two hundred," he muttered in surprised. He saw the people queuing were in tattered clothes with numb expressions. They only occasionally looked towards the door of the workhouse impatiently.

Frye slowed down and said coldly, "There is a limit to the number of homeless poor each workhouse will accept daily. They can only take them in based on the queue order. Of course, the workhouse will examine and refuse entry to those who fail to meet the criteria."

"The economic recession in the recent months has played a part too..." Leonard sighed.

"Those who don't manage to queue will have to figure out a way of their own?" Klein asked subconsciously.

"They can also try their luck in the other workhouses. Different workhouses have different operating hours. However, each one has the same long line. Some of them would wait from two in the afternoon." Frye paused. "The rest of the people mostly starve for a day. Then, they lose their ability to find a job and fall into a vicious cycle that leads directly to death. Those who can't withstand the hardship end up losing their struggle to stay on the good side of the law..."

Klein fell silent for a few seconds before letting out a sigh.

"The newspapers never publish any of this... Mr. Frye, I hardly ever hear you speak so much."

"I was once a pastor in a workhouse of the Goddess." Frye maintained his cold attitude.

When the three of them arrived at the door of the workhouse in West Borough, they showed their identity documents to the doorkeeper, who was eyeing the queuers arrogantly, before they were taken into the workhouse.

The workhouse was transformed from an old church. There were mattresses and hammocks all over the Mass hall. The pungent scent of sweat mixed with the smell of Athlete's foot permeated every corner.

In and out of the hall, there were many poor families. Some swung hammers to break rocks, some picked oakum; no one was free.

"In order to not let poor people rely too much on workhouses and turn into scoundrels, the Poor Law established in 1336 enforced a rule whereby every poor person can only stay in the workhouse for five days at most. Any longer than that, one would be cast out. During the five days, they have to do manual labor, such as breaking rocks or picking oakum. These are the same tasks that criminals in prison do," Frye explained to Klein and Leonard briefly without much emotion.

Leonard opened his mouth, and no one was sure if he was teasing or explaining, "When they leave this workhouse, they could go to another one. Of course, they might not be able to move in. Heh, perhaps, to some people, poor people are like criminals."

"...Picking oakum?" Klein was quiet. He didn't know what else to ask.

“The fibers of old ropes are actually a great material to seal the gaps in boats.” Frye stopped and found a burnt mark on the ground.

A few minutes later, the director and pastor of the workhouse rushed over. They were both men in their forties.

“Salus started the fire here and only burnt himself to death?” Leonard asked, pointing at the ashen mark on the ground.

The director of the workhouse was a man with a broad, bumpy forehead. He scanned the area where Inspector Mitchell was pointing with blue eyes and nodded in affirmation.

“Yes.”

“Before that, did Salus act strangely in any way?” Klein asked.

The director of the workhouse thought and said, “According to the person that slept next to him, Salus had been chanting ‘The Lord has given up on me’, ‘The world is too filthy’, ‘I have nothing left’, stuff along those lines. He was filled with resentment and hopelessness. But no one expected him to break all the kerosene lamps and start a fire to burn the place down while everyone was sleeping. Thank the Lord, someone found out in time and stopped his wicked act.”

Klein and Leonard then found a few people who had slept next to Salus the night before, and they also found the guard that stopped the tragedy. However, those people didn’t have anything new to tell them.

Of course, they used Spirit Vision, divination, and other methods to check if any of the people were lying or misleading them.

“It seems that Salus long had the idea to take revenge and selfdestruct. It seems to be a very normal case.” Leonard waited till the director and the pastor left to express his opinion.

Klein pondered and said, “My divination tells me that there wasn’t any supernatural factors influencing this case.”

“Let’s eliminate Salus’s fire case temporarily,” Leonard concluded.

Just then, Frye suddenly said, “No, maybe there is another possibility. For example, Salus acted at the instigation of someone else, a Beyonder who didn’t take any supernatural measures.”

Klein’s eyes lit up as he echoed, “It’s very possible, such as the Instigator from before!” *Instigator Tris!*

But that wouldn’t have any connection with Mrs. Lauwis’s death...

He thought, creasing his eyebrows lightly.

After hearing Klein's and Frye's guesses, Leonard tugged on his collar and paced about, saying, "Then we have to investigate everyone in the workhouse who came into contact with Salus, as well as everyone he came across after he went bankrupt and was chased out of the house. It's very troublesome indeed... Time is of the essence. Let's split up and do a cursory check here, then head to the third reported death in the West Borough and leave the rest to the police."

"Alright," Klein answered without hesitation.

Frye didn't have any objections. He turned towards the people who had been sleeping near Salus last night.

Klein was about to find someone to question when he suddenly saw Leonard shooting looks at him. He was motioning at the side hall of the workhouse with his chin.

What does he want? Klein was a little lost. He acted as though nothing had happened and strolled around the hall, then followed Leonard into the side hall while Frye was distracted. They made their way through the partition to a silent corner which had no one else around.

"I have a hypothesis," Leonard suddenly said, stopping in front of a shattered window.

Klein looked around in confusion. "What's your hypothesis?"

Leonard with his deep green eyes, he returned a question, "If there were no supernatural factors, what do you think Mrs. Lauwis's outcome would've been?"

Klein thought for a moment, then said solemnly, "The same, just delayed by a week or two, perhaps a month. But to a family like theirs, they would've only seen the doctor when she really was at her limit. As long as her heart problems turned for the worse, there would be no way for her to be saved."

"Then what about Salus? If he hadn't been instigated by someone, what kind of end would he have?" Leonard asked again.

Klein pondered and said, "From the description in the information, Salus was already very angry about his bankruptcy, and was furious that no one saved him. I think that he would've exacted his vengeance sooner or later, but not at the people at the workhouse. He might've targeted the boss that made him bankrupt or the staff of the bank that seized his house."

"What would the result of his revenge be?" Leonard pressed on.

"Without a doubt, he had already decided to end his life. He would have died no matter what the result of his revenge was." Klein gave an affirmative answer.

Leonard nodded and revealed his signature flippant smile.

"Then can we conclude that Mrs Lauwis and Salus were both people fated to die soon?

Klein was a 'knowledgeable' keyboard warrior. Upon hearing the question, he immediately had a guess.

"You're saying that their deaths were moved forward by some supernatural factors? But why?"

"A more accurate description would be, their 'life force' had been shortened by some supernatural factor. It was stolen. And life force is the best material when it comes to summoning evil gods and devils or conducting terrifying curses." Leonard smiled as he corrected Klein's guess.

"Summoning evil gods and devils or conducting terrifying curses..." Klein looked into Leonard's emerald eyes and said, half in doubt, "You seem to be very sure of this? But, for the time being, our investigation sample is only at two..."

Leonard laughed cynically. “Klein, there’s no need for any pretense between us. I saw you break free from the control of Sealed Artifact 2-049, and I know that you’re special. And you should be able to sense that I’m a little different from the average Beyonder.”

His smile disappeared as he looked into Klein’s eyes.

“I’ve told you that there are many special people in this world that can always do things others can’t, such as you... and me.

“This world has a long history. There are many magical items that people wish to obtain, to control. They wish to become the stars of their own show. There aren’t many people like that, but it’s impossible that there are only one or two of them.

“I don’t think that a Beyonder with his or her secrets is a bad person or an evil thug. I don’t think that we even need to be clear on where their special abilities come from, and what they represent... As long as your actions are not endangering me, the Nighthawks, or Tingen City, then you’re still my partner.

Similarly, I hope that you’ll look at me with the same attitude. Of course, it’s best not to speak of this to the higher-ups. Those fogies are old fashioned and conservative, always thinking that special people like us will definitely lose control, definitely feel the pull and temptation of the evil gods or devils.”

But I have more secrets than you can ever imagine... Klein thought to himself. He said frankly, “I share the same sentiments as you. I’ll only look at your actions and your motives and don’t care about how special you are. I will also try not to probe into your secrets.”

After saying this, he added in his heart, *No, actually I do mind and am very curious, but I’m putting up with it for now. Hmm, Leonard thinks that he is the star of a show? What kind of encounters did he have, and what kind of magical items does he possess?*

Leonard unfastened the buttons of his shirt and nodded with a chuckle.

“I’m glad that we have this understanding.

“In action novels, this is called the meeting of two protagonists. The wheels of history are set in motion.

How shameless! Klein gave a perfunctory smile.

He knew that the phrase “wheels of history are set in motion” came from Emperor Roselle...

Leonard paced around quickly, his green eyes brightened as he curled the corners of his mouth.

“Alright, I’ll be honest; I’m quite confident that the victims of these deaths would’ve died within the next three months, but their deaths have been brought forward to the past two weeks by someone, through some means. The other party’s motive should be to summon evil gods or devils, or conduct a terrifying, largescale curse.”

“It is easy for the culprit to hide their murders, given that their victims already showed signs that they were going to die soon. This wouldn’t attract the attention of the police department, or be disrupted by the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind during the culprit’s preparatory phase...” Klein muttered to himself and analyzed the culprit’s thought process.

Leonard smiled and agreed, “That’s right. If three healthy, normal people were to suddenly drop dead, it would definitely attract attention and bring about an investigation.”

“Then how are we going to find the altar used for the ritual? Regardless of whether the culprit wants to summon an evil god, devil, or conduct a terrible curse, he or she would need a sacrificial altar, a ritual. The harvested life force would also have to be stored in a similar place.” Klein chose to believe in Leonard, for he didn’t have any other clues and was unable to make any other deductions.

It doesn’t hurt to try!

Leonard laughed and said, “Klein, isn’t that within your professional domain? Can’t you imagine what is happening around an altar like that?”

Without waiting for Klein to answer, Leonard described, “A thick aura of death with the altar at the center. There wouldn’t be any living things other than the person conducting the ritual in a ten-meter radius. The surrounding temperature would be at least five degrees lower than the average temperature, with a cold wind blowing past it continuously... And the stolen life force of Mrs. Lauwis and the rest will remain within the altar, sealed by a wall of spirituality...”

Having said that, he looked at Klein and teased, “I think that you would be able to divine roughly where an altar with the following qualities would be.”

Klein frowned slightly and replied solemnly, “As long as it’s within Tingen City. Furthermore, I would need a quiet place where I wouldn’t be disturbed. My house, for example. I would also need the personal belongings of Mrs. Lauwis and the rest, as well.”

Klein’s heart also skipped a beat. He felt that Leonard was a little too knowledgeable in the dark arts.

“No problem.” Leonard laughed. He suddenly stepped past Klein and walked toward the hall, not saying anything more.

That man sure has a unique style... Klein cursed in his heart and followed.

When Leonard found Frye seriously taking notes, he put on a serious tone and said, “I have a hypothesis and was hoping that Klein would give it a try.”

“What hypothesis?” Frye asked, appearing cold.

“I’ll tell you if there is a result. I don’t want to be laughed at by

Rozanne and the rest.” Leonard gave a whimsical excuse and changed the subject.

Frye didn’t ask any further. He acted according to the instructions and obtained Salus’s and Mrs Lauwis’s personal belongings from the nearby police station, then met his partners at Klein’s house.

“Wait in the living room and don’t let anybody disturb me.” Klein took out his pocket watch and looked at the time.

It was about six now. Melissa might come back at anytime.

“You can trust us.” Leonard put his hands on his hips and paced around the living room. Frye sat silently on the sofa.

Does Leonard have ADHD? Klein pouted and went to his room on the second floor. He locked the door and sealed the room with a wall of spirituality.

After which, he set up an altar and asked for the help of the goddess, eliminating any disturbances.

Then, Klein wrote a divination statement on a piece of paper.

“The position of the altar.”

He gave a sweeping statement to prevent himself from missing out on any information.

Grabbing the piece of paper and the belongings of the dead, Klein laid down on his bed. He first recalled the scene Leonard described, then silently recited the statement seven times.

He didn’t try using the world of fog, firstly, because that weird and mysterious Leonard was downstairs. Who knew if he would notice something weird about the ritual. Secondly, his Seer potion was about to be completely digested. It was likely that the aid of the ritual was sufficient for the success of his divination.

Klein would only consider finding an opportunity to enter the world of fog if he didn’t get a result. After all, the summoning of an evil god or devil was something that could threaten Benson, Melissa, and himself!

With the help of Cogitation, he quickly entered the dream and saw a hazy, illusory, fragmented scene.

Soon after, an image floated before his eyes.

It was a two-story grayish-blue house bathed in a sunset glow. The windows of the first floor were shut tight and the dark curtains had no gaps. However, they expanded and contracted from time to time.

The soil around the house was dark brown, but nothing was growing in it. The garden around the house seemed to be covered in shadows, dilapidated, and dark.

There was a river flowing silently near the house.

...

Sometime later, Klein exited the dream, having not seen anything else.

Leonard's hypothesis was correct... Where could that building be? There are too many rivers in Tingen City, such as the West Borough, Southwest Borough, the harbor area, the university area... He opened his eyes and rubbed his temples as he thought, his expression serious.

2 Daffodil Street. Inside the living room that was painted with the luster of dusk.

Klein stood in front of the oriel window as he told Frye and Leonard.

“My divination revealed something. I saw a grayish-blue twostory building in my dream. The windows on the first floor were all shut tight, and the curtains were drawn. It’s surrounded by a few meters of brown soil without any greenery or flowers. It also has a terribly gloomy garden, just like the kind you find in a horror story.

“The only characteristic that can be used to identify it is a nearby river, a slightly broad river.

“It might be the Tussock River or Khoy River. We could only find out through process of elimination. Hopefully we can still make it in time.”

The Tussock River was the biggest river in the Loen Kingdom, coming down from the northwest where the Mirminsk mountain was. It flowed towards the southeast, passing by the Midseashire, Awwa County, and then passing through the capital, Backlund, and into the sea near Pritz Harbor.

The locations where it converged in Tingen City included the southwest corner of the West Borough and the harbor in the South Borough. The source of the Khoy River came from the northern York Mountain as it passed through the university district in the East Borough and locally merged with the Tussock River.

Those were the two main rivers around Tingen. The rest could only be considered streams, and none of them had an expansive water surface.

Upon hearing Klein’s description, the pale and cold Frye nodded lightly in agreement.

Since there were no other clues, process of elimination was the only efficient method!

Just then, Leonard smiled and said, “Perhaps we can narrow down the possible locations of the target.”

“How do we narrow down the possibilities?” Klein frowned and asked in reply as he looked at the silver vine-leaf pocket watch.

Leonard chuckled.

“A criminal with a plan and a goal would select targets somewhere far away from the location of his altar. This is a result of their natural instinct—to be safe.

“Only when there aren’t many soon-to-be-dead people left in the areas far from his altar would he consider the nearer targets.

“So, we should read through the information again, exclude the areas where the number of death incidents rose rapidly above average standards.

Klein’s eyes lit up when he heard that.

“Brilliant conjecture!”

At the same time, he sighed inwardly, *I really don’t have the talent to be a detective!*

Frye nodded and picked up the documents on the coffee table and started reading it again.

After a few minutes, he deepened his hoarse voice and said, “There really is such a region, and there’s only one possibility.” “Which area?” Klein asked.

Frye passed the thick stack of information to Leonard who was next to him. He pursed his thin lips and said, “West Borough.”

It’s the West Borough? Klein clenched his fist and immediately suggested,

“Then let’s search the southwestern area of West Borough. That area isn’t huge!”

“I agree,” Leonard echoed as he waved the papers in his hands in agreement, as though he wasn’t the one who suggested narrowing down the scope of their search.

...

The two-wheeled carriage slowly drove along the muddy road. Beside them, the red and orange glow of the sunset reflected off of a broad river that was colored with the twilight radiance of the sunset.

Klein and Frye looked out the windows from both sides of the carriage, inspecting one house after another. They were searching for a grayish-blue house with a dilapidated garden. If possible, they would take note if the curtains on the first floor was drawn.

Leonard leisurely sat in his original spot, leaning against the wall of the carriage as he hummed a popular local tune.

The dim scenery flew past, and Klein caught sight of a grayishblue two-story building from the corner of his eye

In front of the building was a gloomy garden that appeared in ruins.

“Found it!” Klein said while suppressing his voice.

Before he finished his sentence, Frye and Leonard squeezed over to look out the window. There was almost no space between them.

As the carriage drew closer to the building, the dark curtains that were drawn on the first floor appeared before the three Nighthawks’ eyes.

Klein didn’t even need to divine whether they had the right building; he was completely certain that it was the building that he saw in his dream. That was where the evil altar was set up!

None of them stopped the carriage, but instead allowed the carriage driver to continue driving forward. They passed their target and continued away from it, as though they were just passing by.

When they could no longer see the building when they turned around, Leonard told the driver to stop the carriage.

“Klein, return to Zouteland Street in this carriage and tell the Captain to come here for assistance.” Leonard snapped his fingers and smirked at his teammate.

Is he thinking of me as a rookie and that I shouldn’t be involved in such a dangerous mission? This fellow is still quite a nice guy... Klein was stunned as he realized what Leonard meant.

Frye nodded in agreement.

“You just started combat training and your job is a support role.”

I know, and a person who could kill so many in order to hold a ritual won’t be an easy opponent. Only the Captain could make this situation less terrifying... Klein took a breath and agreed rationally.

He looked at Leonard, then at Frye before forcing a smile and said, “Be careful.”

“Don’t worry, I cherish my life a lot. Until the Captain arrives, we’ll only keep watch, and we won’t get close.” Leonard smiled.

Frye didn’t say anything but only picked up his suitcase.

Klein was quiet for a while, he then took out a copper penny and said, “Let me divine once for you.”

He chanted, “What will happen here will lead to a good outcome.” He flipped the coin at the same time his eyes turned dark.

Dang!

The coin flipped into the air, then landed firmly in Klein’s palm.

Klein looked and saw it was the King's head. He immediately let out a breath of relief.

"It's only a blurry symbol, so there are other interpretations. The most important thing is to be careful and prudent at all times," he explained to Frye and Leonard like a Seer would do.

Leonard had already turned around. He waved and jumped off the carriage.

"As naggy as my eighty-year-old grandma..."

Frye nodded seriously and got off with his suitcase.

Watching both his teammates head towards the target building, Klein touched the revolver in his underarm holster and told the driver, "Zouteland Street."

The driver, who had been hired by the hour, didn't object but allowed the horses to continue the journey.

...

36 Zouteland Street.

When Klein entered the Blackthorn Security Company, Rozanne, Mrs. Orianna, and the others had already gotten off work. It was unusually quiet and dim.

Dunn was sitting on the sofa in the guest area. The gas lamp was unlit, and he seemed to blend into the darkness in his black trench coat.

"Found any clues?" Klein, who was searching for the Captain, was given a shock by Dunn's deep voice.

Klein quickly turned around and looked into Dunn's gray eyes as he said, "Yes, we..."

He quickly told him about Leonard's bold hypothesis, his confirmation via divination, and the subsequent discovery of the house.

As for Leonard's confidence and the uniqueness that Leonard had discussed, they were unimportant and obviously not worth mentioning.

Dunn cut in from time to time. When the briefing ended, he abruptly stood up and walked towards the door.

When he was almost down the stairs, he turned around and said, "I almost forgot; you stay here just in case there are any emergencies here."

"Alright." Klein nodded solemnly.

At that very moment, other than Kenley who was on duty guarding Chanis Gate, the other Nighthawks were busy in the field.

Dunn Smith ran down a few steps and suddenly stopped. As he put on his hat, he shouted at Klein through the door, "Lock the door and follow me. Heh, we won't need you to join the battle. First, you can get a sense of the atmosphere, and second, we might require the assistance of ritualistic magic during the final search or inspection. Remember, until everything is over, you have to be at least fifty meters away. You cannot get close to the building!"

Klein was stunned and nodded firmly.

"Alright!"

...

The sun sank beneath the horizon, and the surging Tussock River turned eerie and dark.

Dark clouds obscured the crimson moon, making the grayishblue two-story building look like a monster hidden in the shadows.

The garden before the building was extremely quiet. It was as though it didn’t have any insects, nor any other forms of life.

Klein looked at the scene from a distance, his palms sweating and his body shivering.

He felt that there were countless terrifying things hidden, waiting, and hungry for a bloody feast.

He watched Dunn, Leonard, and Frye move carefully towards the target building, blending into the darkness.

...

On the second floor of the grayish-blue building, in the bedroom without any lights.

A gentle and sweet young maiden with a round face was seated before her dressing table, looking carefully at her face after the complicated skin care routine she had just completed.

There was a silver mirror next to her right hand, its surface coarsely ground, almost unable to reflect a figure.

Suddenly, a stream of blood seeped out from the mirror.

The expression of the gentle and sweet-looking Trissy suddenly grew grave. She stood up, walked to the window, and looked out in silence.

Vines grew all over the dilapidated garden outside the glass windows. The river flowed softly, reflecting the stars in the sky as warm glows suffused out of the nearby buildings.

Everything was silent, as if awaiting the arrival of night.

Trissy, who had ordinary features which combined to make her look surprisingly beautiful, retracted her gaze and walked quickly towards the clothes rack to retrieve a long black robe fitted with a hood.

She quickly put the robe on, fastened the buttons and belt before pulling the hood over her head, transforming herself into an Assassin.

Trissy raised her right hand and swiped her face, immediately turning her appearance under the hood blurry.

Right on the heels of that, she grabbed a handful of shimmering powder from the hidden pouch near her waist and scattered it over herself while reciting an incantation.

Trissy's figure started to disappear bit by bit, her outline vanishing like how pencil marks were being erased by an eraser.

She silently left the bedroom after completing her concealment spell. She moved to the opposite room and then opened the nongrilled window.

With a light leap, Trissy stood on the window sill and looked over the grassy plains to the back of the building. She looked down at the steel fence that had seemingly fused with the night. There, she saw Corpse Collector Frye who was silently making his way over the fence.

She took in a deep breath and fluttered down like a feather, stepping onto the grassy field without a sound.

Frye, who was wearing a black trench coat, cautiously surveyed the surroundings with his custom revolver in his hand, seeking out vengeful spirits or evil spirits that might appear.

He could see such entities directly!

Trissy approached Frye silently, made her way behind him. It was unknown when a dagger smeared with 'black paint' appeared in her hand.

Poof!

She struck quickly, plunging the dagger into Frye's lower back.

But at this moment, the scene in front of her shattered, as if everything was an illusion.

Trissy realized that she was still standing on the window sill, still looking over the grassy field and the steel fence.

Except this time around, it wasn't only Corpse Collector Frye who was standing outside the fence. There was also Leonard Mitchell who was aiming straight at the window sill, as well as Dunn Smith. The captain of the Nighthawks was hunched over as he pressed down on his glabella, his eyes closed as formless ripples spread outwards from him.

Trissy's pupils constricted. She understood that everything that had happened was just a dream. She had fallen asleep unknowingly!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Leonard and Frye fired three shots, accurately hitting the invisible target who was still waking up from her reverie.

Crack!

Trissy's figure started to appear, first cracking, then completely shattering into fragments of a rough silver mirror!

Inside the building, Trissy, who had used a substitution spell, turned around to escape. She followed the corridor and the steps, sprinting all the way to the first floor.

Whoosh! A cold sinister wind blew across the first floor, one that could freeze a person. Formless, transparent figures were numbly pacing around every corner of the building in a daze.

Trissy, who had lost her concealment, felt her temperature drop every time she passed through the spirits. She could no longer control her shivers when she finally reached the sacrificial altar.

The altar was a round table, with a figurine of a deity carved out of bone placed in the center.

This figurine was about the size of a grown man's head, with only a mere indication of her eyes, but the figure was that of a beautiful woman.

Her hair extended from her head to her heels, each strand clear and thick, as if they were poisonous snakes or tentacles.

There was only one eye situated at the tip of every strand of hair, some closed, others open.

There were many puppets strewn around the figurine. The craftsmanship of the puppets was crude. Names and relevant information were written on the puppets; for example, Joyce Mayer.

There were three candles on the table, flickering with a yellowish-green flame despite the cold, sinister winds.

Trissy bowed at the deity's figurine and quickly recited her incantations.

She then pushed away the puppets and extinguished the flames of the candles before picking the figurine up.

Whoosh!

The winds howled fiercely as they shook the closed windows violently.

Clank! Creak! Shards of glass flew around in all directions.

Frye, who had just made his way to the other side of the building, didn't dare to barge into the sacrificial altar recklessly. He shivered, feeling his blood turn cold and frosty. It was making his actions visibly slower.

Suddenly, he felt tightness around his heels as though they had been grabbed by something invisible.

An accentuated sense of coldness spread upwards from the point of contact. A Sequence 9 Beyonder would have turned completely numb by now. But as a Corpse Collector, Frye was no stranger to such situations.

He turned his revolver to the side of his heels and pulled the trigger. It was as if he could see who the enemy was, and exactly where it was.

Bang!

A silver demon hunting bullet pierced the air, causing a shrill howl in response.

The formless figure dissipated and Frye regained his ability to move.

Elsewhere, Dunn Smith, who wanted to reach the second floor by avoiding a frontal assault on the altar, was similarly affected by the cold winds. His body froze as he stopped right outside a shattered window.

Whoosh! The curtains behind the window lifted suddenly and engulfed Dunn, as if a monster had just opened its mouth to devour its prey.

The curtain wrapped around Dunn's head, seeming to have been imbued with life. Dunn's facial features began to press through the constricting cloth.

Dunn, who was about to be suffocated, stomped down with both feet. He straightened his knees and twisted his waist, loosening the curtain's grip with raw strength alone.

He grabbed a corner of the curtain around his head with his left hand and yanked it away before tossing it toward the ground.

Bang!

He fired a shot at the other half of the curtain behind the window, stopping it from attempting another assault on him.

The curtain stopped immediately as a dark red liquid oozed out from it.

Whoosh!

On the field, Leonard Mitchell was reciting his poems and was also hit by the cold sinister winds infused with the intense sensation of death. His teeth chattered, making it hard for him to enunciate his poems.

The messy weeds in the garden suddenly extended, wrapping themselves around his heels. A black shadow hurled itself at him along with the violent winds.

Leonard, whose body had become rigid, failed to fire in time. He could only pull back his shoulder and raise his arm.

Thud! The black shadow smashed into his forearm, the thorns on its body piercing his skin.

It was a pretty, bright-red flower, its origins unknown.

In pain, Leonard tossed aside the flower dyed with his blood.

Bang! He fired a shot at the spreading vines, causing dark red liquid to ooze out.

Tap! Tap! Tap! Leonard quickened his pace and charged towards the shattered window on the first floor where the altar was situated behind.

The vines retracted abruptly from where he had previously stood, as if hiding from something invisible.

Trissy took advantage of the chaos created by destroying the altar and a suspension-style ritual to conceal herself once again. She managed to fool the Spirit Visions of the Nighthawks and escape the pincer attack before making her way to a spot behind the three Nighthawks.

She extended her right hand, immediately causing a cold wind to blow. It carried the flower dyed with Leonard's blood right into her palm.

Trissy did not stop. With the flower in hand, she nimbly made her way over the steel fence and escaped in the direction of the Tussock River.

Leonard, who had just entered the first level, turned his head abruptly, as though he was listening to something.

His expression changed. He frantically pulled up his sleeve and looked at the wound caused by the flower.

With his constitution, the wound had already stopped bleeding. There was only some red swelling that remained.

Leonard's expression became grim. He pinched his left index finger and pulled his fingernail straight out!

His face contorted in pain, but he did not pause. As he recited something silently, he sliced open the coagulated wound with the fingernail. When the fingernail was dyed with his dark red blood, he pulled out a few strands of hair from his scalp and wrapped the fingernail with his hair.

Beside the Tussock River, Trissy slowed down. She shot her gaze toward the flower in her hand.

She was chanting something as a ball of black, illusory fire suddenly appeared in her palm.

The flames enveloped the flower, burning it to ashes.

After completing this, Trissy jumped into the river and submerged herself.

At the same time, Leonard tossed the blood-stained fingernail wrapped in his hair to the corner. He saw it burn and release a foul stench.

The fingernail and hair disappeared quickly, leaving only some dust behind.

Leonard heaved a sigh of relief. He entered the first level through the window and said to Dunn and Frye who were destroying the altar, “The target has escaped. But it’s alright, our primary objective was to stop the ritual.”

Dunn sighed and looked at the puppets on the table.

“She was very cautious and very powerful. She sensed us approaching her ahead of time, otherwise... she should be, at the very least, a Sequence 7 Beyonder.

“Give Klein the signal. Ask him to come over.”

Through the brief interaction in the dream, he had determined that the enemy was female.

Klein was hidden in the shadows of a building dozens of meters away from the target building. He heard the faint sound of gunshots and the howling of violent winds.

If the enemy runs towards me, should I draw my gun or should I pretend that I didn't see him? He thought as he shivered in cold sweat.

A Beyonder that could, through various means, cut short the lives of others definitely wasn't a Sequence 9 or Sequence 8 Beyonder. They certainly wouldn't be someone that a Seer like him could fight against face to face. Even if he sacrificed himself, he might not be able to slow the target down enough for Dunn and Leonard to catch up with him.

It was fortunate that the Evernight Goddess, the Empress of Misfortune, seemed to hear her 'loyal' guard's prayers. No one ran towards the location where Klein was hiding.

After a few minutes, he heard a melodious song coming from the target building.

Cocking his ears to the side so he could hear better, Klein confirmed that it was the popular local tune that Leonard Mitchell always hummed. It was filled with base words.

Phew. He let out a breath of relief. He held his gun in one hand and his cane in the other. He then walked out of the shadows towards the target building.

The popular local tune was the meeting signal that he had agreed upon with Dunn and the rest!

Klein took two steps and suddenly paused. He leaned his cane against the metal fencing and switched the revolver to his other hand.

Then, he took off the silver chain inside his sleeve and let the topaz pendant hang down naturally.

Klein waited till the topaz stabilized and immediately closed his eyes and entered a Cogitation state. He recited a divination statement, "The singing earlier was an illusion.

"The singing earlier was an illusion."

...

After repeating seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the pendant spinning counterclockwise.

"It's not an illusion..." Klein put away his pendulum, grabbed his cane, and quickly got close to the arch-shaped metal gate leading to the target building. He then passed the black cane to his right hand and held it with the revolver.

He extended his hands to touch the fence, intending to push it open, but he suddenly felt a piercing chill. It was as though someone had poured a bucket of ice down his neck without warning.

Klein hissed and jerked his hands back, his teeth clenched.

"It's just like winter here..." Under the dim starlight and distant street lamp, he looked through the garden behind the metal fencing. He saw the withered branches, fallen flowers, and leaves covered with white frost on the brown soil.

Amazing! Klein marveled in his head. He bent his fingers and tapped his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision.

He returned his silver-inlaid cane to his left hand and pushed it against the fence to open the closed gate.

The gate squeaked, and he passed through it sideways. He stepped onto the stone path that led directly to the grayish-blue building. On both sides of the path were twisted plants that seemed to resemble ghouls in the dark.

The scene reminded Klein of various horror stories and paranormal films.

He subconsciously slowed down his breathing and walked faster. However, after just a few more steps, someone suddenly patted his left shoulder.

Badump! Badump! Klein's heart skipped, then started thumping rapidly.

He raised his right hand, aimed his revolver, and slowly turned around to look.

In the dim light, he saw a flimsy branch that had nearly fallen off.

"This is what we call 'scaring ourselves'?" Klein twitched the corner of his lips, waved the cane, and knocked the branch off.

He continued moving forward as faint sobs sounded in his ears. Blurry, translucent "shadows" appeared before his eyes.

These shadows had swarmed over after feeling the breaths of a living person and the warmth of flesh and blood.

Klein jumped in fright and immediately ran into the door of the grayish-blue building.

This is what the Captain meant by "getting a sense of the atmosphere?" It's much scarier than the last time I helped Sir Deweyville... The resentment of that aggrieved spirit is more "rigid" than the shadows. She hadn't taken the initiative to attack back then... He thought as he walked towards the altar in the middle of the living room. It was a round table full of crudely made puppets. Three unlit candles stood amidst the puppets.

Dunn Smith stood right before the altar with his back to Klein. He took one puppet after another and looked at them.

Corpse Collector Frye looked at the floating shadows and extended his hand in an attempt to comfort them, but all his hand did was pass through them helplessly. The shadows didn't attack him, seemingly recognizing him as one of their own.

When Leonard Mitchell noticed Klein's arrival, he changed his tone, turning his voice softer but charming.

"Calm is the morn without a sound,

"Calm as to suit a calmer grief.

"And only thro' the faded leaf,

"The chestnut pattering to the ground [1]."

...

In the soothing recitation of the poem, Klein seemed to see a clear lake reflecting the moonlight and a crimson moon hanging quietly, high in the sky.

The restless shadows calmed down and stopped chasing after the warm breath of the living Nighthawks among them.

Dunn put down the puppet in his hand, turned around, and said to Klein, "This is a ceremony for a terrifying curse. It's fortunate that we've already destroyed it.

"First prepare a ritual to comfort the remaining spirits, then try to communicate with the spirits of the dead and see if you can get any clues from them."

Klein, who realized that he was no longer a burden, immediately held his chest out and said, "Yes, Captain."

He reached the altar in a few steps and extended his hands to sweep the puppets off of the round table.

At that moment, he noticed from the corner of his eyes that every puppet had a name and a corresponding message. "Captain, did you discover anyone you know?" Klein asked in passing.

Then, he glanced at Dunn as Dunn looked at him. Both of them fell silent.

I'm so silly... Why would I ask any questions that tests the Captain's memory! Klein nearly covered his face and sighed.

If it were any other boss, they would definitely find an opportunity to make my life difficult because of this. Luckily, the Captain will forget about this... I wonder if that's an advantage or a disadvantage? He thought, half glad, half joking.

After a short silence, Dunn seemed to finally be capable of differentiating reality from the dreamworld. He replied, "There's someone you know."

"Who?" Klein stopped, his hand still extended to put a candle back to where it was supposed to be.

"Joyce Mayer, the survivor of the Alfalfa tragedy," Dunn replied simply.

Joyce Mayer? Anna's fiancé... Klein suddenly thought of Salus in the workhouse. He seemed to have been instigated and misled by someone, causing him to bring forward his rage and committing arson.

Klein retracted his right hand and said in a deep voice,

"Instigator Tris?"

"He used the lives that were cut short as a sacrifice, intending to curse all survivors of the Alfalfa tragedy? Because he didn't know who uncovered his involvement and lodged a police report..."

If Tris took revenge directly, it would have been impossible to wipe out all the targets scattered throughout Tingen. After two or three murders, he would've been noticed by the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind. Then, he would've lost his chance to continue his murdering spree. Klein filled in the blanks of why Tris had started all this.

Dunn nodded first, then he shook his head.

"Not all survivors, but only survivors in Tingen. His curse ritual can only affect the people within this range."

"Besides, the host of the ritual is a female, not Tris."

Klein creased his eyebrows and asked, "Perhaps it's an expert that the Theosophy Order sent to help Tris?

"Yes, the origins of the Theosophy Order might involve the Demoness Sect. It's fairly normal for their experts to be female."

Dunn smiled and said in his deep voice, "I agree with your judgment. Although we only encountered that woman and not Tris, there are guesses that we can make. Such as, the woman and Tris don't stay together. Or, that Tris was out looking for people who are dying soon."

Klein didn't say anything further. He set the three candles in place, took out the Full Moon Essence Oil, crimson sandalwood, and other ingredients, and set up the altar quickly.

After he used a silver dagger to make a sealed wall, he started praying to the Evernight Goddess, the Mistress of Repose and Silence. He prayed that the shadows inside and outside the house would be comforted completely.

Unfortunately, in the subsequent attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead, Klein could only see a little of what the spirits had seen before their deaths. There weren't any useful clues.

After settling the shadows into a peaceful sleep in the dark night, he ended the ceremony and removed the spirituality wall. He then shook his head and told the others,

"The backlash from the disrupted ritual caused severe damage and the remnant images of the host were lost."

Dunn wasn't surprised. He pointed at the stairs and said, "Let's look around on the second floor and give it another try." "Okay." Klein, Leonard, and Frye nodded in agreement.

The three Nighthawks went up the stairs to the second floor and parted ways to search through each room.

In the end, they met in a bedroom that was filled with a faint aroma. They saw messy dresses lying around and open boxes.

Dunn took up a box from the dressing table and smelled it before asking, "Are these cosmetics?"

"To be exact, they are skin care products. Ever since Emperor Roselle, they were not lumped together with a broad term," Leonard explained with a smile. "Captain, as a gentleman, there are certain things you have to know."

Klein didn't join their discussion but cast his gaze towards the mirror on the dressing table.

There was an obvious crack on the mirror, and there were shattered pieces on the rug beneath.

"The Beyonder left in a rush. She didn't destroy it entirely..." he suddenly said in a deep voice. "Maybe I could give this a try." "I'll leave it to you," Dunn replied in confidence.

Klein quickly brought the candles up from the first floor and lit them in front of the shattered mirror.

Under the dim, flickering candlelight, he took out the items like Full Moon Essence to create a spirituality wall.

After Klein prepared everything, he stood before the mirror that reflected the lights of all three candles and chanted in Hermes, "I pray for the power of the dark night.

"I pray for the power of the mystery.

"I pray for the Goddess's loving grace.

"I pray for the mirror to receive a brief restoration, I pray for it to show every person that it reflected in the past month."

...

As the incantation was being recited, a strong wind suddenly howled within the spirituality wall.

The shattered pieces of the mirror swirled off the ground and returned to their original locations.

The mirror that was covered in cracks suddenly rippled with a gloomy brilliance. Klein wiped his hands over it and a human figure suddenly appeared in the frame. But that figure wasn't Klein.

It was a gentle and sweet looking young maiden with a round face. Perhaps it was because the mirror was broken or perhaps it was because the backlash of the interrupted ritual that affected the second floor as well. Her facial features were blurry and her actual appearance wasn't exactly clear.

But even so, Klein found the person unusually familiar.

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1. Adapted from Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam A. H. H. OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII: 11."

When faced with a strange sense of familiarity, other Sequence 9 Beyonders might try their best to recall or even disregard and forget about it. But a Seer was different. Klein immediately ended the ritual and dispelled the wall of spirituality. He took out a piece of paper and wrote on it a statement: "The source of the sense of familiarity."

After which, he sat on the edge of the bed in the room and silently recited it with the piece of paper in hand.

Seven times later, his pupils became darker. He fell asleep with the help of Cogitation and started conversing with his own spirituality.

In the hazy, contorted world, Klein saw a carriage. He saw a young lady wearing a long gray dress.

This lady had smooth black hair, her face a little round. She had a gentle and pleasant demeanor, but her body was shivering unnaturally.

The image flickered and once again, Klein saw this young, pretty lady at the underground market. She was squatting and conversing with someone.

The dream receded quickly and Klein woke up, understanding why the image he saw in the mirror was so familiar.

He had met this person before!

The first time was at Daffodil Street, in the district near Iron Cross Street. The Captain and the rest were chasing down Instigator Tris that night... There must be a connection. Klein thought for a few seconds, then set up the ritual once again. He asked for the help of the Goddess to sketch the portrait of the enemy in his memory.

Dunn and the rest had been waiting silently, without interrupting Klein unnecessarily. Only when he was done sketching did they crowd over and inspect the portrait.

"You met her before?" Dunn asked.

Klein nodded slightly and answered simply, "Yes. I saw her at the public carriage stop on Daffodil Street the night when you were going after the Instigator. It was in the district near Iron Cross Street."

"Then, there's a good chance that she was the enemy just now. The partner of the Instigator." Dunn nodded in thought.

Leonard suddenly chimed in, "Don't any of you feel that this portrait is very familiar? She looks a lot like Instigator Tris!"

Klein froze, immediately casting his gaze at the portrait again and studying it carefully.

"Yeah, they look very similar indeed. Round face, narrow eyes, gentle demeanor..." The more he looked at the portrait, the more he felt that what Leonard said made sense. The biggest difference was that Instigator Tris had ordinary features while the young lady could be considered pretty.

Klein raised his head and looked at Leonard, noticing that he was signaling something to him by raising his brows.

What does he mean? Klein was confused.

Dunn Smith guessed, "She could be the Instigator's sister. Maybe like her brother she joined the Theosophy Order or the Demoness Sect."

Leonard sighed after he realized how bad Klein was at reading his mind. He said in a serious tone, "I have a bold idea." "What idea?" Dunn asked.

Leonard described succinctly, “I think that this person is Instigator Tris!”

“What?” Frye exclaimed in shock.

Dunn creased his brows and said, “What you mean is that Instigator Tris is actually female, or a male who’s pretending to be a female? No, from the dream, I can confirm that she’s female.”

Klein had been exposed to many creative and ridiculous plots after all. He took another look at the portrait and immediately had another guess.

“Could it be that Instigator Tris became a female?”

That could explain many things. For example, why would the trail leading to Tris suddenly sever? Why couldn’t they find any traces, even with divination? Perhaps because there was a fundamental change to their target! The only question was how he could change into a woman in such a short span of time. And it appeared to be rather simple... He had pretty decent looks after his transformation even. I mean, to be honest, she’s pretty attractive... Klein thought, distracted.

Leonard nodded in relief, “Yes, that’s my theory. This can perfectly explain why Instigator Tris had seemed to vanish. It also fits with the strange fact that the upper echelons of the Demoness Sect are all female.”

Dunn and Frye were momentarily at a loss for words.

Even though they had seen many monsters and wondrous things, it was their first time dealing with a transformation like this!

“What you mean is that there are a considerable number of women in the upper echelons of the Demoness Sect that used to be men?” Dunn asked. He didn’t wait for an answer before saying, “That could be possible... Perhaps it’s their, no, the unique characteristic of their potion.”

Klein shivered a little as he listened. He felt that the potion of the Demoness Sect was a trap!

“Let’s hope that a similar potion doesn’t exist in the pathway of the Seer... No, definitely not. That is the pathway of the Demoness. Even the name of the potion sounds wrong. But I still don’t know what the corresponding Sequence 1 to Seer is...” Klein subconsciously started praying to the Goddess.

“Can potions accomplish such a thing?” Frye asked with a little disbelief.

Leonard laughed and threw up his hands.

“Even a mid to low sequence potion can cause unimaginable changes. After all, they all originated from the Creator.”

Dunn turned to look at Klein. “Try to divine where the target will appear next.”

“Alright.” Klein went over to the pile of dresses and picked out one with mixed emotions. He spread it over the carpet.

He held his cane over the dress and recalled the target’s features and relevant information. He then began to recite in his heart.

“Tris’s... no, Trissy’s whereabouts

“Trissy’s whereabouts.”

...

Seven times later, Klein’s pupils turned from brown to black. Wind started to blow around him.

His left hand released his cane, allowing the black cane to wobble.

Despite the shaking, the cane failed to fall. It stood tall in its original position.

“There’s an interference...” Klein said with a deep tone.

An interference implies that our assumptions are correct!

That lady just now was most probably Instigator Tris, no, Trissy!

Upon seeing this, Dunn nodded indiscernibly.

"They live up to the reputation of the Demoness Sect which has been active since the last Epoch..."

Since Tris had transformed into Trissy, Dunn deduced that she wasn't part of the Theosophy Order, but the Demoness Sect.

Surveying the surroundings, Dunn sighed and said, "We can search for her through different means, such as where these clothes came from or the owner of this house. We can also get the police department to patrol the train stations and piers."

We might be able to get some clues like that, but Trissy will definitely have had enough time to leave Tingen. Yes... I'll try it again above the gray fog when I'm back at home. Klein was cautious of people like Trissy who wanted to unleash a massacre on a whim. He wanted to desperately find her and execute her on the spot.

"Leonard, head to the police department and gather a group to wrap up things here. Klein, you can go back and rest now..." Dunn rubbed his temples and paused for a few seconds. He said to Klein, partially to test him and also to teach him. "How would you have handled this evening's mission? Assume that me, Leonard, and Frye are the only members on your team."

Klein creased his brows and thought for more than ten seconds.

"I'd first use divination to ascertain if the ritual would take effect soon. If the answer was negative, then I'd stick to observing and not approach. Then I'd notify the police department to deploy personnel around the area, as well as gather at least five cannons to bombard the entire building till wherever Trissy was hiding was leveled.

"She could either be blasted to death in the building, or attempt to flee amidst the cannon fire. This would easily expose her. Until then, I would station you and the rest at different spots..."

He got more and more excited as he continued. He felt that his idea was simple and effective, barbaric and decisive. It was very safe and very appropriate!

Dunn, Leonard, and Frye were dumbfounded. They didn't say anything for a long time.

"Captain, is that not a good idea?" The excited Klein's heart thumped rapidly when he saw that they had no reaction.

Dunn was silent for a few seconds before he said, "No, it is a good idea. But the premise is that we have to confirm that forceful destruction of the altar wouldn't create a more disastrous outcome... Sigh. As longtime Nighthawks, we're accustomed to relying on ourselves, our powers as Beyonders, and guns in all circumstances. We're not used to allowing normal people to come into contact with supernatural incidents..."

Alright, I was always an ardent fan of firepower bombardment... Klein added in his heart.

...

Klein and Leonard walked to the carriage station about five hundred meters away before they saw it.

After waiting for a while, they returned to Iron Cross Street. One went to the nearby police station, while the other returned to Daffodil Street.

When Klein arrived at his front door, he adjusted his clothes and made sure that everything was alright before fishing out his keys and opening the door.

Melissa and Benson were in the living room, quietly doing assignments and reading books respectively under the light from the gas lamp.

Benson must be tired after toiling at work the entire day; yet, he perseveres in his studies after he comes home. What a determined man... I can't do that, all I can think about now is lying down... Klein glanced at his brother and smiled, giving a silent greeting by raising his hand.

Benson smiled and said, "I now understand the price behind a handsome salary."

"There's a price for everything in this world. There's something we must give before we can gain anything in return," Klein said, leaving his cane on the rack next to the door.

"That's apparently something Emperor Roselle said, right?" Melissa stopped writing and looked up.

The Tingen Technical School was different from universities and public schools. There was only two weeks for summer break, from late July to early August. Their lessons resumed the moment the hottest days were over.

"Is that so? I don't remember..." Klein replied, his expression a little rigid.

He took off his hat and headed upstairs. He intended to divine Trissy's whereabouts as soon as possible.

Suddenly, he heard his stomach rumble. He felt intense hunger pangs.

Oh right, I haven't had dinner. But the note I left said that the security company would provide food and asked them not to leave any food for me... Seriously, Captain, you actually forgot about it... Klein's expression changed several times as he intended to pretend that he was full.

At that moment, Melissa turned and looked at him. She pointed to the kitchen and said, "We left a small piece of lamb chop and a bowl of thick vegetable soup for you. There are a few sticks of bread left too."

After saying this, she buried her head back into her work and muttered to herself, "I felt that meals provided by work wouldn't be too good, probably making people lose their appetite..."

Sis, you worry too much, no—you're just so meticulous! Klein was suddenly energized. He smiled and said, "Melissa, your concern is very reasonable. It's true that I'm actually a little hungry. Yeah, let me change and take a shower."

Although his mouth was already watering, it was even more important to confirm Instigator Trissy's whereabouts!

No one knew what insane measures that bastard would take in order to exact revenge on society!

"Okay." Melissa didn't lift her head but continued her revision.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein ran to the second floor and entered his bedroom.

He locked the door, took off his jacket, and underarm holster. Then, he took out a simple silver knife from the drawer.

After sealing his room with a spirituality wall, he took a breath, steadied his emotions, and walked four steps counterclockwise.

After the usual incantation, Klein appeared once again in the lofty palace above the gray fog. He was getting used to the mad ravings that he heard during the transportation process.

Having completed a few rituals that day, he massaged his temples as he was slightly tired. He willed a piece of brown goatskin to appear on the long bronze table.

Klein thought seriously, then wrote down the divination statement: "Trissy's whereabouts."

He wasn't sure if the name was written correctly, but he could use the girl's appearance and other detailed information as a guide as well.

He held the goatskin and leaned back into the chair. He recalled the things related to Trissy in his head, then recited the divination statement seven times.

He emptied his mind, closed his eyes, and entered a dream state with the aid of Cogitation.

In the illusory scene amidst the fog, he saw a steam engine that spurted dense smoke and sparks. He also saw the rows of leather seats in a clean train carriage.

The gentle and sweet-looking Trissy with her round face and long eyes sat near a window. There was a checkered fishnet hat on the table before her.

Klein made repeated attempts to confirm the train number, but he failed to discern it.

Soon, he couldn't stand the pressure and left his dream. The long bronze table and illusory crimson stars appeared before his eyes again.

"I could only confirm that Trissy took the steam locomotive and left Tingen. There weren't any more clues... Sigh, it seems like this mysterious space only helps me eliminate interferences, but it doesn't do much to enhance the standard of my divinations..." Klein rapped the edge of the table and thought about his next step.

Through the divination, he could be entirely certain that the target had once been Instigator Tris. The new Trissy, however, was already fleeing Tingen. Given the circumstances, he didn't think his new divination would help Dunn.

Klein quickly made a decision. "Captain already said that he would send a telegram to Backlund, Enmat Harbor, and other main stops along the railway, so they Trissy will be placed on the wanted list throughout the country. I won't report the divination result then, in case it would draw suspicion towards me..." Klein quickly made up his mind, because regardless of his warning, Dunn was already using the most appropriate measures to follow up on the matter.

Since he couldn't see the train number in the dream divination, using the spirit pendulum and other methods would be equally ineffective, even if he attempted to do so by process of elimination.

It was just like the situation with the red chimney.

At that moment, he felt mentally drained, so he didn't stay above the gray fog any longer but enveloped himself with his spirituality and simulated the feeling of falling.

When he "returned" to his room, his mind was filled with the thought of tasty, glistening mutton.

"I must add some fennel... Praise the Lady!" Klein swallowed his saliva, swiftly removed the spirituality wall, and opened his door.

...

The next morning at twenty minutes to nine, he entered the Blackthorn Security Company with his cane in hand.

"Good morning, Klein! I have good news!" Rozanne waved her hands excitedly from behind the reception desk.

Klein eyes lit up as he asked, "We caught Trissy?"

"Trissy? Who is she?" The green-dressed Rozanne looked lost.

"...You probably don't know her. What's the good news?" Klein redirected the topic.

Rozanne replied with a glowing smile, "The Captain's request has been approved. The police department is going to transfer two police staff members who have come across supernatural incidents to be clerks here! I finally don't need to frequently stay up all night! Praise the Lady!"

"That's great news," Klein echoed sincerely.

After exchanging a few more pleasantries with Rozanne, he went through the partition and went underground. He planned to continue with his mysticism lessons.

When he passed the Captain's office and the Nighthawks' recreation room, he popped his head in and looked around. He saw that Dunn, Leonard, and the rest were still there. It meant that the search and elimination investigation the night before had failed to return anything worthwhile. The rest would be handed over to the police department, so that they could take care of the tedious follow-up tasks.

At first, Klein wanted to chat with the Captain to get an update on the situation. But he saw that Captain was busy typing telegrams, so he decided not to disturb him. He could ask the Captain again at lunch.

He went underground by following the stairs and saw the two classic gas lamps in their metal racks. He saw the ever-quiet corridor which was lit up by the light behind the glass.

He breathed in the cold but refreshing breeze, took a few steps, and suddenly stopped.

He suddenly looked towards the gas lamp and his eyebrows gradually creased.

He had made a crucial mistake!

A mistake that could only be made by someone with knowledge from Earth!

In his divination above the gray fog the night before, Klein had seen Trissy taking a steam locomotive. Hence, he subconsciously believed that it was something happening at that moment.

But—this world had yet to invent electric lights or similar equipment. When the sky grew dark, there were almost no steam locomotives in operation that ferried humans. Klein, who was accustomed to trains which operated at night, had instinctively missed out on that fact!

In other words, it wasn't something that happened last night!

It was a scene from the future!

Which meant that it was going to happen that day or the day after!

Klein's heartstrings tightened and he paced back and forth. Then he went upstairs again.

He knocked and opened the door to the recreation room, and he saw that Leonard was reciting a poem by the window, looking helpless.

Klein ignored Kenley, Royale, and Seeka Tron who were playing cards. He looked towards Leonard and said, "I have a question for you."

"Would it be that you want to learn tricks to entertain the ladies?" Leonard teased, putting down Selected Poems by Roselle.

He exited the recreation room and followed Klein halfway down the stairs that led underground. He then looked into Klein's eyes and said with a chuckle, "It seems like you did a successful divination last night."

Klein didn't explain further but said straightforwardly, "I divined that Trissy will leave on a steam locomotive."

After their conversation at the workhouse in the West Borough, he didn't mind appearing slightly special before Leonard.

"Steam locomotive, the earliest train is at seven in the morning..." Leonard took out his pocket watch from his shirt and flipped it open to take a glance. "No time to waste! I'll tell the Captain that I received a reliable tip."

He quickly went upstairs and left the Blackthorn Security Company. After waited downstairs for a few minutes, he returned and went into Dunn Smith's office.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief and watched the Captain send a telegram after gathering the other Nighthawks who were playing cards. They soon left out the door.

Recalling what happened earlier, he felt conflicted. It was a different lesson than the one he received from the death of the suited clown. He had committed a mistake with similar characteristics which made him seem to understand this lesson more, leaving a deeper impression on him.

Turning past the armory and entering the duty room, he took off his top hat and coat, then hung them onto the clothes rack naturally.

Old Neil had just finished making himself some hand-ground coffee. He happily took a sip and asked, "Would you like one?"

"Alright." Klein sat down, as carefree as if he had returned home.

Old Neil glanced at him and frowned, quipping, "Still three cubes of sugar with a spoon of milk? You're such a sweet tooth. This is harmful to your teeth and your body."

"No, no, no, I only like it sweet when I'm drinking coffee. When I have grilled steak or roasted meat, I prefer rose salt, black pepper, fennel, and other condiments." Klein always believed that he was a fan of all flavors.

Old Neil finished the coffee quickly. He pushed it over and said, "Do you want to take a break or start straightaway?"

"Let me settle down for a few minutes. The Captain and the team got a tip about Trissy's whereabouts, and they are on the way to the steam locomotive station. I wonder what the outcome will be..." Klein sighed.

Old Neil clicked his tongue and said, "Is the tip detailed enough? Are they sure which train it is?"

"No, it's not confirmed," Klein said, pursing his lips.

Old Neil suddenly laughed. “Under such circumstances, the possibility of failure is much higher than success. Trissy should be a Sequence 7 Beyonder and a Beyonder at that level won’t be captured so easily. Heh heh, don’t rely on divination, divination isn’t all-powerful. You’ll only obtain symbolic signs which are very easy to interpret them wrongly or ignore something.”

Klein recalled the mistake that he made this time and felt melancholic. He nodded sincerely.

“Yeah, divination isn’t all-powerful.”

After he said that, he sighed. His mind, body, and soul suddenly entered a magical state. He leaned backwards slightly, intending to let out a breath. Just then, he suddenly heard an illusory shattering noise in his ear.

He felt something dissolving inside him, blending together with his spirit.

Klein half-closed his eyes and experienced the unique and indescribable feeling in silence.

Klein didn’t need anyone to tell him that it was a result of the complete digestion of the Seer potion.

...

The first town that the Tussock River passed by after it flowed through Tingen City was called Wienia. It was also the first stop from Tingen to Backlund for the steam locomotive.

On the platform, Trissy changed into a long beige dress and put on a woman’s circular hat. Fine fishnet gauze hung down from the edge of her hat, covering half her face. Her appearance became blurry and indiscernible.

She had already sent a telegram to her partner in Tingen, to remind the other person to be careful. She told them that she had used money she burgled to buy a steam locomotive ticket to Backlund.

The reason Trissy didn’t get on the train from Tingen but went downstream to Wienia was because she still had her instinct and rich experience as an assassin.

Woo!

A train let out a long and sharp whistle as the long metal behemoth chugged to a stop next to the platform while spurting smoke and sparks.

Trissy didn’t carry any luggage and entered the first cabin. At the same time, she decided to get off the train after three stations and enter Backlund through other methods.

...

In the basement of Saint Selena Cathedral, Klein closed his eyes and leaned backwards in his seat.

He took in the complete digestion of the potion, and he faintly saw one illusory star after another. Those stars seemed to share a baffling connection with him, and they seemed to want to lump together and fuse as one.

After the indescribable feeling of hunger and thirst receded, Klein returned to normal and stopped having any additional experiences.

But my mind feels a lot more relaxed and pure... He opened his eyes and thought.

At that moment, he knew that he had become a real, complete Seer.

The light of the gas lamp glowed through the glass, illuminating the guard room. Old Neil finished flipping through his newspaper, took a sip of coffee, and looked at Klein.

"How do you feel now? Have you calmed down? Or do you need a glass of wine, or an advance on your salary, or a day off?"

Klein, who had completely digested the Seer potion, was attempting to change his "switch" that activated his Spirit Vision with Cogitation. He didn't want it to be too obvious.

The present him no longer needed to rely on a physical motion to activate his Spirit Vision. Therefore, he could use a more concealed approach to achieve his goal; for example, stroking the joints of his middle finger with his thumb in quick succession, or clicking twice with his left molar.

Klein considered the situations in which he needed to use his Spirit Vision while holding a revolver in one hand and a cane in the other. Finally, he settled on clicking his molar. His left molar would be used to activate the Spirit Vision, and his right molar to deactivate it.

After repeatedly suggesting to himself, he completed the change. He then opened his eyes and smiled.

"I was merely too concerned about the Captain's operation. I don't need to calm myself down."

At the same time, he clicked his left molar twice and attempted to activate his Spirit Vision. He wanted to familiarize himself with this method as quickly as possible.

Cough! Cough! Cough! Old Neil started coughing violently. He coughed till his face turned red, like a cooked lobster.

"What happened?" Klein froze before asking in concern.

He scanned Old Neil's aura seriously, only to notice that the colors representing his health were still normal, only a little dull due to his age.

Old Neil coughed for nearly twenty seconds before earning respite. He felt for his cup of coffee and slowly took a sip. "Everyone makes mistakes, ahem. I choked on my drink just now... Shall we begin our mysticism lessons for today?" "Alright." Klein silently clicked his right molars twice.

Klein was elated, yet frustrated that he had completely digested the Seer potion a week or two ahead of his prediction. He was naturally glad that he was freed from the risk of losing control and would advance soon, obtaining even more Beyonder powers. That was something anyone would be happy and excited about. But he was also frustrated, as it disrupted his plans and schedules.

Considering the fact that he still had to stay with the Tingen Nighthawks for some time, Klein thought that secretly advancing to Clown wasn't the wisest choice. If he did so, he would be constantly worried about being exposed, and he would be unable to use his abilities when there were missions, making it even more dangerous for himself.

He planned to learn from Spirit Medium Daly and submit an application to the higher-ups. He would use his contributions to obtain the recipe and extraordinary ingredients before officially advancing into a Sequence 8 Nighthawk.

But there was a difference between grasping a potion in a month and in a year. Klein could bear the scrutiny of the Holy Cathedral and become a talent for nurturing, but he didn't want the higher-ups to suspect him. He needed to find a convincing reason to explain his circumstances.

He had planned to use the time before the Seer potion was completely digested to lay some foundations with the Captain. For example, he would mention that he felt his spirituality become more active whenever he went to the Divination Club, or pretend to casually describe the laws of a Seer that he

had derived from helping other people divine their fortunes. He could also mention that he didn't hear any voices that he shouldn't be hearing, or see things that are not for his eyes.

This way, the higher-ups of the Nighthawks would think that he had unintentionally learned something from Daly when completing his "mission" and had done a more thorough job than her.

This would make the higher-ups focus more on summarizing the laws and discovering the "acting method," reducing the suspicion placed on Klein.

That way, I could even help the Captain and the rest learn about the acting method... Klein added in his heart. He felt that Dunn Smith was a good captain. He had no glaring flaws other than his poor memory. Thus, he wanted to reduce the risk of Dunn losing control and make him more powerful.

Of course, Klein could also choose to apply after a year to avoid any risks. But the continuous coincidences and the red chimney he saw in his dream divination gave him no choice but to improve his abilities as soon as possible.

"I'll lay the foundation with the Captain three or four times over the next two weeks before formally submitting my request. At the same time, I can head over to the underground market to see if there are any of the necessary extraordinary ingredients. They will probably be very expensive..." Klein quickly made a decision and focused his attention once again on the mysticism lessons.

Time passed quickly as lunchtime slowly approached. Old Neil finished his coffee and cleared the stuff on the table as he laughed.

"Your mysticism lessons will come to an end soon. From the test just now, it would seem that you can create charms for yourself now."

"That's my plan for the next few days." Klein heaved a satisfied sigh.

Charms were different from the protective amulets he had given Benson and Melissa. They needed to be carved with the help of ritualistic magic, and they had certain unique abilities that could be used in battle.

But a low-grade charm couldn't do everything. The spirituality it contained would decrease over time and had to be renewed once every two weeks. Also, he needed to activate them with specific incantations; it was impossible to use them at will.

Furthermore, the charms wielded by the Nighthawks were still limited to the "domains" of the Evernight Goddess. Klein could only make three different kinds of charms for the time being.

The first was the Slumber Charm, and its effect was similar to Dunn Smith's and Leonard Mitchell's ability to put someone to sleep with their singing. The second was the Requiem Charm, which was able to soothe ghosts, souls, zombies, and the like. It could also deal with vengeful and evil spirits to a certain extent. The last was the Dream Charm; its abilities allowed the wielder to enter the dream of someone else.

These abilities were similar to the abilities of the Midnight Poet and Nightmare from the Sleepless Sequence, so Dunn and Leonard had no use for these charms. Corpse Collector Frye, Sleepless Royale, and Kenley would bring one or two along with them, but they hadn't needed them in a long time. They frequently brought their charms back to Old Neil so he could "recharge" them.

Old Neil glanced at Klein and smiled.

"I remember you saying that you practiced a lot this month and have run out of materials. Are you going to the underground market?"

Klein was taken aback at first before he nodded with a pained heart.

"Yes."

He clearly knew the prices of the ingredients. He could only hope that he succeeded in making the charms on his first try instead of wasting materials...

After being presented with the mission of bringing lunch underground, Klein put on his jacket and hat before returning to the Blackthorn Security Company on the second floor with cane in hand.

As he walked past the recreation room, he saw that Leonard and the rest had already returned and were enjoying their lunches.

Knock! Knock! Knock! He knocked on the Captain's door.

"Please come in." Dunn's mellow voice sounded.

Klein pushed the door open and took off his hat.

"Captain, did you catch Instigator Trissy?"

Dunn rubbed his temples and shook his head in exhaustion. "We didn't find her at Tingen Station, but according to the telegraph we received from Backlund, a passenger saw her in the first class carriage of the earliest train. Regrettably, she got off in the middle of the journey."

"How regrettable." Klein sighed even though he had expected this. "Divination isn't all-powerful..."

Dunn's gray eyes swept past him.

"There's no need to be depressed. It isn't easy to capture a Sequence 7 Beyonder. At the very least, we disrupted Trissy's evil ritual and saved at least forty innocent lives. Furthermore, we understand her situation now. She can no longer commit crimes as she wishes."

"If she tries to do something similar, she'll be noticed, discovered, and reported at any time. Sooner or later, she'll be captured by the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the

Machinery Hivemind. It's even possible that she'll be killed."

"Let's hope that is the case. May the Goddess bless us." Klein drew the crimson moon on his chest.

Following that, he paused and pondered over his words.

"Captain, I haven't heard unwanted voices or seen unwanted visions for over a week now. Also, that's true even when I am in Cogitation or using my Spirit Vision."

"Really?" Dunn creased his brows, puzzled.

Klein immediately elaborated, "I feel that I'm not far off from achieving full control over the Seer potion. This could be due to my frequent visits to the Divination Club and helping others tell their fortune."

"...Why do you think so?" Dunn immediately changed his seating posture, his expression lost.

Klein added a stammer into his sentence. "E-every time I head to the Divination Club, I can feel my spirituality becoming more active, and every time I help someone divine something, my heart, body, and soul become more relaxed. I've also come up with a set of, well, a set of rules for a Seer. I've been following it strictly, just like how a Mystery Pryer can "do as you wish, but do no harm." I found inspiration from this maxim and tried coming up with a maxim designed for Seers.

"I think that this might be an effective way to help Beyonders gain control over their potions faster and reduce the risk of losing control. Just like Madam Daly who has always been a Spirit Medium."

It was unknown when Dunn had taken out his pipe. He placed it at his nose and took a whiff, seemingly forgetting about Klein as he thought for a few minutes.

"A remarkable guess, and an interesting trial..."

Klein had only wanted to briefly mention it this time around to set up an underlying reason, so he did not say anything further. He switched to a half-joking tone and said, “Perhaps I’ll be the fastest Nighthawk in history to gain control of a Sequence 9 potion.”

“May the Goddess watch over you,” Dunn blessed him, not taking him seriously. He then slipped into deep thought once again.

Witnessing this, Klein turned around and said his goodbyes before leaving the Captain’s office.

He was closing the door to the room when he suddenly thought of another difficult question. *How in the world was he going to act as a Clown!*

Must I join a circus? There are no fixed circuses in Tingen, they’re all roaming ones... Klein’s expression became a little bitter.

Being a Seer was still a rather respectable occupation. Klein would still be able to hold his head up high even if he was spotted by someone he knew. But if he became a Clown, there was no way his reputation would hold!

Perhaps there are other ways of acting as a Clown. There were no circuses or clowns when the Blasphemy Slate was revealed to the world... Forget it, I won’t have the chance to advance for another two or three weeks, so there’s no need to deliberate over this for now. Klein avoided the question and headed to the reception area. He walked toward Rozanne, Mrs. Orianna, and Bredt to fetch his and Old Neil’s lunch.

After eating lunch, Klein only rested for half an hour before he rushed to the Shooting Club to practice with his revolver. He didn't dare to relax, not one bit.

After practicing his shooting skills day after day and expending more than a thousand bullets, he was finally shooting well enough to earn Dunn Smith's basic approval. He was pretty good at fixed-target shooting.

After practicing for a while, he put away his revolver and took the public carriage to a stop close to the house of his combat teacher, Gawain. Then, he walked for ten minutes before arriving at the door.

He changed into his knight training suit that had been left to dry in the sun. After running, skipping rope, lifting weights, squatting, and other exercises, not to mention footwork and punching training, he was covered in sweat and felt exhausted.

"Take a break for fifteen minutes." Gawain's blond white hair and deep facial lines made him look hard and stern. He took out his pocket watch and flipped it open to glance at the time.

Since they first began training, he had ultimately maintained his silence. He only spoke to Klein when there was a need to switch training methods or to correct one of Klein's mistakes whenever one arose.

Klein panted for air, but he didn't dare to rest straightaway. He paced back and forth slowly. The most direct feedback of his combat training was that he was much tanner. His skin had turned bronze under the sun.

Gawain put away his pocket watch and stood next to the crude training field behind his house. He crossed his arms as he watched Klein cool down. He was as quiet as a marble statue.

"Teacher, besides fighting with fists, would you teach me how to use a straight sword, broadsword, rapier, and spear?" Klein asked proactively. He was in a good mood, as he had just digested the Seer potion.

He had seen weapons like the straight sword and rapier in Gawain's collection room before. There was also chest armor and full body armor. He knew that Gawain wasn't only good at fighting hand-to-hand.

Bathed in sunlight, Gawain swept his gaze at Klein. He lowered his voice and replied, "It's useless for you to learn any of those. Those weapons have all fallen behind the times, and their only place is in museums or the private collections of collectors..."

He fell silent for a few seconds before adding with a voice that had experienced the vicissitudes of life, "They have been eliminated... You should focus on guns. Even combat is merely supplementary."

Klein looked at his listless teacher and chuckled as he spoke.

"I don't think so."

"Every minister, every Member of Parliament, every general, everyone of them thinks so," Gawain said, clenching his teeth.

Klein stopped and acted like he was a true keyboard warrior. He responded with ease and fluency, "No, they have merely retreated from the front lines of a battlefield. They still have their uses elsewhere.

"Why does combat have to be used against firearms? They could be used together. I believe a person who is more flexible, swifter in action, and quicker in response could use guns in a more effective manner."

When he saw Gawain's eyes suddenly sharpen, Klein turned smug and continued, "The other weapons aren't eliminated either. They only need some enhancement to be more portable..."

"...We could form a squad with high maneuverability. A group that's designed to circle the front lines and launch an attack from behind the enemy and fight right to their core. In such a small-scale surprise attack, a warrior who has outstanding hand-to-hand abilities and familiarity with various kinds of weapons could play an important role. You can imagine such a scene..."

Klein gave full play to his ability of knowing a bit of everything. He mixed and matched all the combat tactics the special forces on Earth had and described them to his teacher.

He wasn't sure when Gawain's breathing became heavier. He stood there without moving an inch, seemingly unwilling to break the scenes he imagined.

Klein stole a glance at the man's reaction. He felt smug in his head as he cleared his throat and said in a restrained manner, "Teacher, what do you think about my plan? Is there any possibility of realizing it?"

Gawain's body quivered as though he just awoken from a dream. He looked deeply into Klein's eyes and said, "Your break is doing you well. Repeat the whole set of exercises ten times." *Huh?* Klein looked lost.

Very soon, he started running and snapped back to reality. He roared in his heart, *Ten sets? Teacher, no!*

I don't want to celebrate my complete digestion of the Seer potion like this!

Hey, didn't you gain any inspiration at all?...

Looking at Klein running towards the other side of the training field, Gawain suddenly uncrossed his arms and covered his face with one hand.

He closed his eyes tightly, and the wrinkles on his face were deep and obvious.

...

After nearly puking from exhaustion, Klein took a shower, changed clothes, and bade a still silent Gawain farewell. He took the public carriage and left.

He didn't return home directly but headed to Evil Dragon Bar near the harbor. He planned to inquire about the price of Beyonder ingredients and buy items for making charms.

On the way, Klein kept his mind on his tiny stash that he was carrying with him. He forced himself to stay alert and reached his destination with great difficulty.

"I need to save four pounds for the remaining balance that I owe to the detective company. I can only use three pounds and five soli tonight..." He touched the paper notes in his pocket before grabbing his cane and alighting the carriage.

At that moment, the sun had already begun slipping below the horizon. All the houses were gradually tainted with a twilight luster. The boxing matches and rat-baiting with dogs were already warming up in Evil Dragon Bar.

After passing through the billiard room and numerous rooms, Klein finally entered the underground market.

He looked to the left and right, but he didn't see Monster Ademisaul who was always active around there.

"Didn't Old Neil say that Ademisaul only managed to survive because the boss of Evil Dragon Bar feeds him?" Klein asked himself curiously.

As a Nighthawk, he remained vigilant to matters like that. He approached the brawny man guarding the door and asked, "Where's Ademisaul?"

The brawny man replied without a smile, “I have no idea where he’s sleeping. He’s been like that lately. He lies down in shivers and chants ‘Dead, dead, all corpses, everyone has to die.’”

What scenes did he see this time? What triggered him? Klein creased his eyebrows slightly and asked for more details. He wanted to know where Ademisaul was sleeping, but the guard didn’t know either.

When I’m done, I’ll look for him via divination to see what he’s been through... After taking note of this, Klein walked towards one of the two rooms at the end of the trading market.

According to Old Neil, the room on the left was for loans and repayment, while the room on the right was for the buying and selling of precious items, including Beyonder ingredients.

When he opened the door to enter the room on the right, Klein realized that there was a partition that separated it into two spaces, the inside and the outside. There were another three customers waiting on the outside.

He lowered his silk top hat and queued behind the three customers. He leaned his body forward and supported himself with the cane as he waited in silence.

Soon, the door of the partition opened and a customer in a bluish-gray harbor worker uniform came out. He kept his head low and left in a hurry.

Klein lightly clicked his left molar twice and looked at the man with Spirit Vision. He then looked at the other three customers. There was nothing wrong with them other than the usual minor illnesses that people had.

After another ten plus minutes, it was finally his turn.

He opened the door and entered the room that was lit with a kerosene lamp.

He locked the door and took the seat that belonged to the customer. He looked towards the old man wearing a black felt hat opposite him.

“I’d like to know what Beyonder ingredients you have, and at what prices they are being sold.”

The cheek muscles of the elder were droopy and the wrinkles at the corner of his eyes were deep, but his body was well-built. He didn’t find Klein’s request weird because many customers weren’t willing to let another person know what they wanted to buy before they confirmed that the seller had it available. Generally, they wished to be introduced to all options.

The old man flipped to the newest pages of the notebook, stole a glance at Klein, and took a sip of his honey wine before he said, “Water Ghost’s brain tissue costs from three to fifteen pounds depending on how intact it is. Star Crystal, 150 pounds per 50 grams. 200 pounds for one Queen Bee Grass. 170 pounds for an adult black-spotted frog... 280 pounds for Human-faced Rose, but there’s only one...”

Klein controlled his emotional response. After he listened to the old man’s introduction, he was surprised that an underground trading place like this had fewer than thirty Beyonder ingredients.

As he touched the notes worth seven pounds in his pocket and thought of Miss Justice’s attitude towards a thousand pounds, he sighed.

“Unfortunately, there is nothing I want.”

Without waiting for the elder to pose any further questions, he quickly turned around to open the door and made an exit.

He returned to the underground market and looked around blankly. He stood there for a while and sighed with a bitter smile.

I’m probably the poorest boss among all the secret organizations... That only steeled his resolve of getting ingredients internally from the Nighthawks or through exchanges with Justice or The Hanged Man.

After circling the underground market twice, Klein picked and purchased ingredients to make charms, such as a partiallyfinished silver piece, herbal powders needed for rituals, and natural ores. He spent one pound and fifteen soli in total.

My private stash of money only has five pounds ten soli left. Excluding the final payment to the detective, I still have one pound ten soli... After Klein silently did the math regarding his financial situation, he felt helpless.

Of course, he knew very well that he had only been working for just over a month. If the time span had been extended to a year, he should have been able to save up more than a hundred pounds.

“In another two weeks, I’ll have to tell Benson and Melissa that I’ve gotten a raise to three pounds. We can hire a maidservant, but I won’t have a private stash of money anymore...” Klein thought as he walked towards the exit of the underground market.

Just then, he saw Old Neil in his classic black robe entering slowly.

“Got everything?” Old Neil greeted with a chuckle.

“Yes,” Klein answered frankly.

Old Neil tsked immediately. “You came really early.”

“That’s because I’m still hungry, but you’ve already had your dinner.” Klein chatted casually with Old Neil.

After a while, the boss of Evil Dragon Bar, Swain, walked in with his navy officer uniform draped over him. He approached the two of them with a mask of solemnity and lowered his voice.

“I need your help.”

“What happened?” Old Neil suddenly turned serious, and Klein couldn’t help but feel a tug at his heartstrings.

Swain’s brown hair was messy, and there was a strong smell of alcohol in his breath. He replied in a low voice, “A member from the Mandated Punishers has lost control nearby. We have to finish him before he harms any commoners!”

Lost control? Klein's heart tightened as he nearly blurted out his question.

Even though Dunn and Old Neil had frequently emphasized the possibilities of losing control and the harm it caused, this was the first time he was experiencing an incident like that. He felt a little horrified, a little lost, a little scared, and a little saddened. He felt extremely mixed emotions.

"Among the cases that we... have to deal with annually, a quarter of them were a result of Beyonders who lost control... And among the quarter of cases, a large number of them are our teammates." Dunn's words flashed past Klein's mind, slowing his reaction.

Old Neil, who had experienced many incidents like this, immediately asked, "Where is the Rampager? What do you need us to do?"

Klein was taken aback from hearing this. He had believed that a sleazy, "half-retired personnel" like Old Neil would find an excuse to reject Swain's request or extort a huge sum in exchange for his help. Never did Klein expect Old Neil to participate without any hesitation, not minding the differences between Nighthawks and Mandated Punishers.

Klein suddenly understood something when he looked at the serious Old Neil. It didn't matter if they were Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind. Their aim was to stop supernatural powers from harming the innocent and maintain peace and stability in Tingen. If they were met with a dangerous and urgent situation, their sense of duty would propel them to help without hesitation!

Swain answered succinctly, "Be my support!"

He didn't explain why the person lost control or where the Rampager was. Instead, he made his way to the exit quickly.

This ex-captain of the Mandated Punishers was clearly an old alcoholic, but Klein realized that he could not keep up with the man's pace. He needed to break into a jog to ensure that he was not left behind.

He turned his head to look at Old Neil, only to see the old Mystery Pryer break into a run.

The three of them didn't pay any attention to the gazes of the guards on their way there. One of them had an old navy uniform draped over him, another was in a dark classic robe, and the other in a black trench coat. They charged out of the billiard room and into Evil Dragon Bar.

The customers who were drinking shifted their gazes from the rat-baiting competition to Klein and company.

"Is that Boss Swain?"

"Where's he going in such a hurry?" "Did someone default on their loan?"

...

Amidst the soft murmurs, some of the customers focused their attention back to the cage. They once again broke into an uproar, venting the stresses of their day. However, some of the more perceptive customers felt a faint sense of unease.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Klein, Old Neil, and Swain ran across the road and entered the harbor district.

"On that boat." Swain slowed down and pointed at a cargo ship not far away. "Two Mandated Punishers are circling the Rampager, preventing him from entering the Tussock River. Help me influence him and bring him under control. Leave the rest to me."

Old Neil panted for air and said, “Alright, b-but you have to give me a minute. Phew, a minute to recover.”

Swain nodded and didn’t say any more. He charged up to the ship and joined the fight.

Upon hearing the sounds of combat on the ship, Old Neil looked at the somewhat nervous Klein. He took out a piece of silver about the size of a baby’s palm from a hidden pocket near his waist. He then passed the silver to Klein and said, “Slumber Charm. The incantation to activate this amulet is the phrase ‘Evernight’ in ancient Hermes. After you finish the incantation, inject your spirituality into the charm and then throw it at the target after three seconds.”

“Alright!” Klein extended his hand to receive the charm and felt moved.

This charm was carved with Hermes incantations on both sides, as well as the corresponding symbols, Path Numbers, and the spell’s characteristics. He didn’t need to activate his Spirit Vision to feel the deep, serene power flowing within the charm.

Old Neil stood up straight and took out a similar charm from his hidden pocket and held it in his palm. He joked as he walked toward the cargo ship, “Do not be too nervous, relax and think about something else. For example, I lent you that charm. If you’re going to use it, remember to make one for me in return. Of course, you can wait till next month, when you receive a new quota of materials before you do so.”

This... He really is the experienced Old Neil... Klein placed the charm into his left pocket, reached into his holster, took out his revolver, and adjusted the hammer and drum.

“I don’t feel that nervous anymore...” He had a gun in one hand and his cane in the other. He made his way up the steps with Old Neil and boarded the cargo ship.

This cargo ship had obvious signs of age. Although it was powered by steam and had a chimney, it retained its past fixtures such as its mast and sails. Furthermore, only its surface and some other portions were plated with metal; the remaining sections of the ship were still made of wood.

As the sounds of the battle intensified, Klein and Old Neil suddenly heard a loud noise amid the din while searching for a way to enter the cabin.

The wooden cabin was instantly shattered, its fragments flying everywhere. A figure fell through the hole and crashed onto the side of the ship.

Klein didn’t have the luxury of time to evaluate the man’s injuries. His gaze was focused on the monster which was charging towards the hole.

The monster was over 1.8 meters in height and was wearing a tattered shirt and trouser. Its ankles were covered with dark green scales, and a layer of skin had formed between its fingers and toes, as if they were the webbed limbs of an aquatic creature.

It had a head covered in wrinkles, still barely resembling a human. Its scales were coated with a sticky fluid that continuously dripped onto the floor.

Sizzle!

The sticky dark-green liquid corroded the deck slightly, leaving visible marks behind.

Bam! Swain punched the monster from the side, causing it to stagger two steps to the side.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Even with the ridiculous muscles Swain had, he was clearly inferior to the monster. Despite having his punches and kicks connect, they were unable to smash through its scales and cause physical harm. Swain was momentarily reduced to a wretched state as he staggered.

If not for Swain’s astounding sense of balance and the efforts of the other Mandated Punishers to shoot and suppress the monster, Klein suspected that this blue-eyed elder would’ve been beaten to death by the monster.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Swain took multiple steps back, then advanced once again, like a moth to a flame.

But Klein could sense that he was accumulating something, waiting for something.

Bam!

Swain was sent to retreat, his body obscuring another Mandated Punisher's field of vision.

The monster took this chance to charge towards the opening.

It wanted to escape the ship and jump into the Tussock River!

Looking at the wrinkled, sticky head of the monster, Klein lifted his right hand and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The silver demon hunting bullet hit the monster's body just as he predicted. But it had only hit its scales and failed to fully penetrate its body.

The monster let out a ear-piercing shriek before it exerted strength with its feet and pounced at Klein.

When a stinking fishy smell hit him, Klein suddenly hunched down and rolled to the side.

Clang! He felt the ship shake as fragments had hit it as well.

At the same time, he heard an old but deep voice recite an incantation in ancient Hermes, "Evernight!"

Klein rolled over two more times. He couldn't care about his cane as he lifted his head and revolver in a fluster. All he saw was Old Neil tossing out his charm calmly, despite being incredibly close to the monster.

The piece of silver was instantly swallowed by a dark red flame and released the faint sound of an explosion.

A deep, serene power spread forth. The monster, who had almost destroyed the side of the ship, rocked. Its movements became sluggish.

Swain charged out from the cabin. He approached the creature and pulled back his arm, hitting the monster like a jackhammer. His punches connected with the head of the monster.

But he could barely inflict a wound, let alone cause any fatal damage. But Klein could sense that whatever the blue-eyed elder was accumulating had finally reached its peak.

Boom! The monster seemed to recover. It flailed its arm and made Swain take five steps back in retreat. Each of his steps caused cracks to form on the deck.

Seeing that the monster was about to turn around and jump off the cargo ship, Klein took out the Slumber Charm from his pocket in a hurry.

After which, he expertly recited the phrase in Ancient Hermes, "Evernight!"

Suddenly, Klein felt the silver charm in his hand turn ice-cold, as if it was made from snow.

He didn't think too much about it. He injected his spirituality into the charm, then pulled his arm back before throwing it forward, sending the charm flying towards the monster.

Meanwhile, the murloc-like monster had jumped into the air.

The dark red flames illuminated the surrounding darkness and the faint explosion was like a prelude to a slumber as it quickly radiated outwards.

Bam!

The monster fell onto the dock, squirming into a ball. It was temporarily in a half-asleep state.

Klein was just about to rush to the side of the boat and shoot at the monster's head when he suddenly saw Swain charge out and jump over, his navy uniform already long gone.

He changed his posture in the air, his muscles tightening.

Using his spiritual perception, Klein could feel something that had been suppressed erupt. Swain descended from the sky and slammed into the body of the monster. He then straightened his back and landed a heavy fist on the head of the monster.

Crack!

The monster's skull shattered into pieces. Dark red blood and grayish brain matter laced with the green sticky liquid splattered all over the ground.

"This is one of the abilities of a Folk of Rage?" Klein muttered to himself as he stood near the broken side of the ship.

Old Neil held his left arm and leaned over to look at what had happened below.

At that moment, Swain was standing straight. He stared at the monster under his feet that had just lost its life.

He took out a metal flask and opened the lid. He drank a good half of the liquor before tilting the flask, pouring the remaining liquor onto the monster.

After finishing this, Swain looked like he had aged considerably, his back hunching a little.

Old Neil sighed as he looked at the scene below. He whispered to Klein, "I know this Mandated Punisher who lost control. He had followed Swain for almost thirty years, once clearing water ghosts who had been killing people on the shore. He also captured evil Beyonders who were trying to escape through the Tussock River..."

He didn't continue, but Klein understood what he wanted to say: A guard who had made many contributions and killed countless monsters ended up becoming a monster himself.

This was not an isolated incident. It was a possible outcome that many members of the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind would one day face.

TL Note: Hi, CKtalon here, the translator of LoM. I've included the author's notes before the book went Premium in China below.

Author's Notes:

It has been two months since LoM was first released, and it's time to go Premium.

In the past two months, I nearly didn't say much in the Author's Notes or interact much with you. The main reason is that I'm increasingly convinced that the best communication between author and reader is inside the novel. I will write whatever I wish to express or describe inside the story, so there's no need for me to say anything else.

Yes, back to LoM, I probably had this idea to find the joy from first coming into contact with web novels. That feeling of "wow, there can be such a world" or "there's actually such a magical world."

Back then, every book presented a variety of different and interesting worlds. It always exposed me to more, making me unable to extricate myself from those worlds as they expand my imagination. Of course, it has to do with me having little exposure to similar novels.

Therefore, when I felt that I had made sufficient preparations in creating the framework of a relatively new world and an interesting and amazing system, I began this book with uneasiness and courage.

With "acting" the 22 Pathways as core, with 220 potions and 220 "jobs," this is a part that I hope the most that can interest everyone. In addition, it mixes in Cthulu mythos, SCP Foundation elements, and the vibes of the first Industrial Revolution's era and a steampunk world.

I read many books and created many settings, but I know that what's most important is to carefully tell this story. I took my time to tell it, which is why the first volume's pace is extremely slow. It's also why chapters consisting of more than 410,000+ Chinese characters (255,000+ English words) were released free. I wanted to honestly develop the plot and accentuate the characters to portray the world. I didn't seek so-called climaxes and presented the scenes in my heart to you.

Thanks to MAM's writing, I was able to have standards that can attract others when writing slice of life parts, allowing me to be equipped with the ability and writing flair needed to honestly tell a story.

In the past, I learned how to express, or it could be said that every writer or author can innately express. But now, I feel that I've begun restraining myself. Many a time, I would not describe it, but use actions, speech and expressions to present the emotions, without any inner monologue. I might not even use actions, speech, and expression, just describing it coldly, like the chapter with the female lead workers. It's also my wish to maintain standards at critical points in LoM.

This book's various frameworks are probably the most complete one among all my books. Look forward to how I handle everything.

This is my thoughts and attempts for this book. I hope everyone will like it. I wish you can support me by paying for Premium chapters; after all, I still need to make a livelihood. I still need to meet the demands of my wife...

I've always been a normal person, and I've never had any doubts to that. At the same time, I'm also a person who's very lazy and have many personality problems.

I once thought of organizing my own fan club like other authors, but, aiyah, it's really frustrating and tiring. Then, there was no more 'thens.'

I once thought of having a Weibo [1] to amass some popularity, but, aiyah, it's really frustrating and tiring. Then, there was no more 'thens.' I've already lost track of the last time I updated on Weibo.

I made a public WeChat account and attempted writing somethings, but, aiyah, it's really frustrating and tiring. Then, there are updates only once in a while.

I attempted to hire others to help me run the social media account, but I always find it awkward and embarrassing seeing the content posted by others. So, I stopped it.

Phew, I wish to be a mediator for myself. Admit it, you are a lazy person. You are a person who is flawed when it comes to social interactions. You are a thin skinned person who wants face at the cost of your life. You are a person who doesn't like getting disturbed by various miscellaneous matters. You are just like it is to wash a pig is to waste both water and soap.

Perhaps, what I can do well and am willing to do well is to write novels, the depiction of the story in my heart.

That is how I reconcile with myself, not to live on awkwardly or force myself to become popular. For the public account, I'll post something when I think of it. If there's nothing, forget it. Well, reconciliation is just an artistic way of saying convincing. The accurate description should be to live in self-abandonment. *Rubs hands nefariously.*

After this communication, we will have Premium chapters for the next update. I'll make my plea here for you to support Premium and vote with your Power Stones. There will be a mass release! Really, I have a stockpile!

Well, there will at least be 5, maybe 6!

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1. Chinese Twitter.

Klein looked at Swain standing before the monster's corpse before looking sideways towards the Mandated Punisher who was helping his semi-conscious partner up by the arm. Klein suddenly felt an indescribable sadness.

It was almost impossible for members of the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind to be known as heroes. The things they did were never made known to the public but only hidden in confidential dockets. But the danger and pain they endured were ever so real.

Perhaps there would be a day when my enemy will be one of my teammates... Klein sighed silently. He felt the heavy weight that all Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind carried.

At that moment, Old Neil let out a sigh.

"Let's go. Let's not disturb them."

"Okay." Klein picked up his cane. Just as he widened his stride, he suddenly noticed that Old Neil was still holding his left hand. He asked, concerned, "Are you hurt?"

Old Neil chuckled briefly before saying, "I got stabbed by one of the shrapnel earlier. If I was still young, I definitely would've been able to dodge it. Luckily, it's just a small cut."

He moved his right hand slightly to let Klein see the tiny wound that was still lightly bleeding on the back of his left hand.

After he confirmed that it wasn't a big issue, Klein walked off along the gangway as he sighed.

"Mr. Neil, you're much calmer than I imagined. Despite being less than two meters away from the monster, you could still chant the incantation calmly and use the charm."

Although the rampaging Mandated Punisher had leaped towards Klein in the form of a monster, Old Neil was physically very close to him the entire time.

Old Neil chucked at the compliment.

"I'm an experienced Nighthawk. Among the dangerous things that I've done, what happened just now isn't even in my top ten. Once, when I was patrolling Raphael Cemetery with Dunn, I had no idea that a corpse had turned into a zombie and left its tomb to lie in ambush in the shadows of the trees. I passed by without noticing it at all since I was looking for some hidden spot. Heh, you know what I mean. In the end, he leapt onto my back and seized my throat."

Klein felt gripped by terror when he heard the recollection as he voiced out his guess.

"And under such a situation, you were still calm enough to use a charm? Or did you use some spell that a Mystery Pryer could cast quickly?"

Old Neil stole a glance at him and chortled. "No, Dunn managed to drag that zombie into a slumber in time. I'm telling you this story to tell you that, as a Nighthawk, you not only have to believe in yourself, you also have to trust your teammates too." Klein fell silent for a few seconds. Then, he replied both sincerely and jokingly, "Mr. Neil, you are so wise today."

Old Neil did a tiny hop and found his footing on the pier. He replied in disdain, "That's because you only get to know the most trivial side of me usually."

The two of them left the harbor and walked towards Evil Dragon Bar.

Klein put away his revolver, set his cane aside, and took off his jacket. Under the light of the gas street lamp, he started checking if there was any damage to his jacket.

"How lucky. There are only a few splinters and a patch that got dirtied..." He removed the splinters and roughly patted the dust away. Then, he put it back on.

Old Neil looked at him with a smile and mimicked his tone by adding leisurely. “What a pity, there’s no way to claim compensation.”

Klein was temporarily at a loss for words.

I’m not such a person! He emphasized in his heart.

As the public carriage arrived, Klein took out his silver vine-leaf pocket watch and flipped it open to check the time.

“If there’s nothing else, I have to head home,” he turned to tell Old Neil.

Old Neil nodded slightly and said, “Enjoy your dinner at home. You don’t need to think about the Slumber Charm. I’ll get Swain to compensate me. He’s a rich man after all. Of course, I won’t go today. I have to consider his mood.”

Klein opened his mouth, but in the end, he only said, “...Thank you for your generosity.”

He boarded the carriage quickly and returned to Daffodil Street. It was already past seven in the evening, and the sky had already grown dark.

Klein took out his keys to open the door and saw Melissa taking off her fishnet hat and setting it on the clothes rack. He smiled and did small talk.

“You just got back?”

Then, his mixed emotions suddenly vanished, and he felt relaxed and warm.

“There was a practical lesson in school today,” Melissa explained seriously.

Klein sniffed and smelled the fragrance of food. He was stunned and asked subconsciously, “Then, who’s cooking dinner?”

The moment he finished his sentence, both of them answered the question in unison, “Benson!” Their tone had a hint of alarm.

Benson, who had heard their conversation, walked out of the kitchen. While wiping his hands on an apron, he said, “Do you have no confidence in my cooking? I remember that before Melissa learned how to cook, you two would wait for me to come home and watch me cook with anticipation. Actually, cooking is so easy. You want potato beef stew? Put in the beef first, then the potatoes, then add some seasoning...”

Klein and Melissa exchanged glances and remained silent.

Putting aside his cane and took off his hat, Klein turned around and smiled.

“I think it’s time to hire a maidservant. It’s very unhealthy to not eat dinner on time.”

“But I don’t want to have a stranger next to us when we chat. That’ll make me feel uncomfortable,” Melissa said, subconsciously finding an excuse to object.

Klein spoke with a smile as he took off his jacket.

“I don’t mind...”

Just then, his expression froze, and he stopped what he was doing.

I almost took off my jacket. I still have a revolver at my armpit...

Ahem. He cleared his throat and pretended nothing happened. “Don’t mind her. When we get home, we can let the maidservant rest in her room. I doubt any maidservant would dislike resting.

Hmm, we must find a maidservant who’s willing to learn how to cook.”

He didn't want to endure the torture of a cuisine that left him guessing in the future.

Benson stood at the kitchen and nodded in agreement.

"When we have time, we can go over to Tingen Family Servant Assistance Association. They have a great deal of experience and many resources in this field."

"Alright, it's decided then!" Klein ignored Melissa's unwilling look.

...

Backlund, Empress Borough, Viscount Glaint's residence.

Audrey Hall left the party with her personal maid, Annie. They came to the second floor and entered the bedroom that the Viscount had prepared.

She took off her glamorous dress and her lightweight dancing heels slowly with Annie's assistance. She then put on a black hooded robe that she had prepared ahead of time.

Pulling up the hood, Audrey stood before the full mirror and examined herself.

She saw that more than half her face was covered by the shadow of her hood, and only her beautiful lips were clearly exposed.

Long black robe, face hidden by shadows, a mysterious feeling... This is something I've been dreaming of wearing all this time! Audrey thought to herself happily.

Worried, she added a blue boat-shaped soft hat under her hood. With the fine checkered fishnet drooping down, her facial features became even more indiscernible.

"Not bad, that's it!" Audrey stuffed her feet into leather ankle boots, looked to the side, and told Annie, "Wait for me here. No matter who comes, do not open the door."

Annie looked at her helplessly and said, "But you have to make sure that your trip doesn't take more than an hour."

"You should trust me. I have kept my promise every single time in the past." Audrey smiled and leaned in towards her personal maidservant. She hugged her and kissed her cheek as etiquette demanded.

Then, she walked quickly and pulled up her hood. Turning around, she exited the bedroom through a secret door.

She walked all the way down and came to the side door of the viscount's residence where she saw that there was already a carriage waiting there.

Glaint stood amidst the shadows as he glanced at Audrey and complimented sincerely, "By dressing up like this, you are really, yeah—like the description Emperor Roselle often used—very cool."

"Thank you." Audrey pulled up an imaginary skirt and curtsied elegantly.

The two of them got into the carriage and left the villa. They arrived at a house about ten minutes away.

Outside the house, Audrey saw Apprentice Fors Wall and her friend, Arbiter Xio Derecha, whom she had been seeing recently.

Fors's slightly wavy brown hair and her light blue eyes showed a natural laziness. She pointed at Xio Derecha next to her and said, "She's an excellent persuader, capable of helping you get things that you want."

Xio Derecha was slightly shorter, about 150 cm at most. Her facial features were soft, but she seemed pretty young and immature.

Although her shoulder length blond hair was messy and unkempt, and she was in a traditional knight training suit, she carried an indescribable look of dignity and a convincing charm.

Audrey had met her a few times. She smiled faintly and greeted, “Miss Xio, can I trust you?”

“You don’t have to worry at all.” Xio Derecha smiled and gestured with her hand.

Just as she walked to follow Audrey and Viscount Glaint, they heard a sudden thud.

Audrey looked towards the source of the sound and saw that a triangular blade coruscating with a cold glimmer had fallen beside Xio Derecha’s leg.

Audrey and Xio Derecha exchanged looks, simultaneously at a loss for words.

After nearly twenty seconds, Xio Derecha quickly squatted and picked up the triangular blade and hid it on her body.

“We have to prevent the occurrence of an accident. Some people lack rationality, and they aren’t convinced easily,” Xio Derecha explained seriously.

Audrey nodded and replied with a clear voice, “I believe you...”

“These are tools to convince those b*stards to talk to us calmly,” Fors added, looking sideways at the lawn.

The quartet didn’t continue conversing and walked a few steps forward. They knocked on the wooden door with three long and two short knocks.

The door squeaked and opened. Slowly, using her Spectator state, Audrey looked into the house that had many people sitting around randomly. They employed various methods such as hoods or masks to conceal their looks. Some didn’t even bother and exposed their faces openly.

Almost instantly, Audrey noticed a black-robed man on a single seat sofa.

That man wore a hood too, hiding his looks under a shadow.

He looked at all the guests in silence, giving people a feeling that he was somehow in a commanding position.

He is very confident, but his gaze is very disgusting. His gaze moved up and down my body like two slippery tentacles wanting to tear off my clothes... Audrey’s senses were sharp. She carefully observed and made a judgment calmly, but she nearly had goosebumps.

Fors introduced him.

“That’s Mr. A, a powerful Beyonder, the leader of this secret gathering.”

Mr. A? That sounds more like a code name for a criminal rather than a powerful man of mystery. It can't be compared to The Fool at all... No, only gods or demigods can be compared to Mr. Fool... Audrey felt a sense of superiority as she thought about this.

She looked calmly at Mr. A and spoke to Fors and Xio Derecha with a hushed tone, "Are there any stories about this man?" The hooded Viscount Glaint was equally curious.

Xio Derecha replied sternly, "There were several such incidents in the past. Sequence 8 Beyonders, some even at Sequence 7, have targeted and tried to deal with Mr. A, but they've all mysteriously disappeared."

"So he truly is a powerful Beyonder," Glaint marveled.

They walked into the room as they spoke. The guards immediately closed the door behind them.

After adjusting to the gas lamp's light in the room, Audrey saw two blackboards with several phrases written across them right in front of her.

At that moment, Fors, who had an unlit cigarette in her hand, whispered, "Those are the requests of the members of this gathering. You should be able to understand that many people do not wish for others to know what they possess to avoid being a target of greedy people. Thus, they write their requests, or what they are selling, as well as the rough price on the blackboards anonymously."

Audrey nodded. She didn't care to observe the members of the meeting; instead, she shifted her gaze to the words on the left board.

"I need a pair of eyes from a mature Manhal Fish."

"The dust left behind by vengeful spirits, 165 pounds."

"Three pages from Emperor Roselle's notebook, 20 pounds."

Audrey couldn't maintain the state of her Spectator when she saw that. She was as shocked as she was excited.

These prices... these prices are too... too cheap! She thought in excitement and joy.

As she walked, her gaze shifted as she saw other notices.

"Tears of an Infant flower, 200 pounds."

"Mummy Powder, 10 grams, 5 pounds."

"Murloc Slime, 30 ml, 29 pounds."

"Formula for Sequence 8 potion Sheriff, 450 pounds."

...

Too... just too cheap! The Beyonder ingredients all cost less than 300 pounds! Audrey's eyes sparkled as she found a place to sit together with her companions.

Xio Derecha leaned over and whispered into her ear, "Do you have anything you want?"

Audrey breathed heavily. Emperor Roselle's famous quote flashed through her mind: "I want it all!"

She had two elder brothers, rendering her eligibility to inherit the aristocratic title and the main portion of the inheritance null. But as a lady adored by her parents and brothers, she had property, farmland, pastures, mines, jewelry, stocks, and bonds to her name. Together, they were valued at 300,000 pounds.

This was a part of her inheritance, but she only possessed them in name before her father, Earl Hall, passed away, or when she got married. Every year, she received a corresponding amount from a trust fund.

But even so, she could receive 15,000 to 25,000 pounds a year, making her one of the richest women among the nobles in the entire Loen Kingdom.

Of course, she had expenses she couldn't avoid as a noble. And now that she was receiving annual payouts, she could no longer pester her parents for money all the time.

She controlled herself and answered with reservation, "For the time being, I have my sights on Emperor Roselle's notebook. I adore him, and I think that the special symbols and literature he created hold a mysterious power; it's just that we haven't found the correct way to decipher them."

Audrey, you are becoming more and more hypocritical... She added in her heart.

Just as she had said that, a young man in a white shirt sitting near them stood up excitedly. He agreed with Audrey, "Yes! That's true! I've finally met someone who shares the same opinion as me!

"I'm the person with the three pages of the notebook, and I can sell them to you right now!"

Audrey was at a loss at first before she replied with a smile, "Then please allow me to express my gratitude."

She took out a pair of 10-pound notes and handed them over to the man, then received the three pages of Emperor Roselle's diary in exchange. Of course, no one here knew that they were part of his diary, and thus everyone generally called them his notebook.

Audrey flipped through the pages after she received them and confirmed that the writing was similar to the previous pages that she had come across.

She put away the diary and asked Xio and Fors softly, "Who can I look for if the notes are fake? Mr. A?"

"Yes, Mr. A will not allow any fraud to take place in his gathering. And I could help you mediate this privately too," Xio Derecha replied eagerly.

"I understand." Audrey entered her Spectator state and surveyed the Beyonders and Beyonders-to-be around her.

There were many people looking over because of the excitement of the young man just now. They were observing Audrey and Glaint, some making it obvious while others were more discreet, but Audrey and Glaint's hoods covered their features well.

There are sofas and chairs strewn all around the venue, all facing the board. The material of the furniture is rather normal, indicating that the person who gathered them here, Mr. A, isn't a noble and doesn't care much about the venue... Yes, with the confidence he displayed, he need not be overly pretentious with the venue... Audrey looked around and calmly observed.

Mr. A looks at all the ladies present, his gaze often lingering on those who have above-average looks... He's lecherous... Why is he looking at me so frequently? Can he see through my robe?

Audrey was shocked at this deduction. She felt disgusted, as if she had just eaten a fly.

But her worries quickly eased, for she noticed that Mr. A was not looking at her body or the bodies of the other ladies...

This means that his eyes cannot see through fabric directly. His sense of sight is exceptional. It's as if he's observing me at a close distance. With that ability, the hood won't achieve much. Audrey calmly observed the rest of the people engaging in their own deals and got an understanding of the circumstances of some of the people there.

At that moment, Mr. A's facilitator walked over and whispered to Audrey's group, "You can write your requests on a piece of paper and pass them to me, or wait till the break later to write whatever you want to sell on the blackboard in the small room."

Fors took a whiff of her cigarette and surveyed the surroundings cautiously. "Have you considered which Sequence 9 formula you want?"

She had kept her promise and told Audrey and Viscount Glaint about all the Sequence pathways she knew of.

Audrey pretended to think before saying, "Spectator, I want to become a Spectator. And, I also want the advancement of

Spectator, the Telepathist."

She considered the fact that she would have to come into frequent contact with Fors and Xio Derecha in the future, making it highly possible that they would realize that she was a Beyonder, a Spectator. Thus, she decided to take this opportunity to reveal this to them and completely conceal the fact that the Tarot Club existed.

Even though I'll be wasting some money, it'll still be worth it... Audrey praised herself.

At the same time, she noticed that Xio Derecha was looking at the blackboards from time to time, her expression was that of desire and depression.

Xio told me that the corresponding Sequence 8 to Arbiter was Sheriff. She's looking at the 450-pound price tag? Well, it's obvious that she wants the formula for Sheriff...

She's already been an Arbiter for more than a year, and she has been unknowingly acting the role of an Arbiter. Her potion should have been digested already...

All these details tell me that Xio lacks money!

As Audrey was deducing all of this, Viscount Glaint revealed his choice.

"Apothecary, I want the formula for Sequence 9 Apothecary!"

Feeling the gazes from Audrey, Fors, and Xio, he explained himself with a chortle, "To me, health and not having to worry about major illnesses and harm is the most important thing!"

"A rational decision. I once dreamed of becoming an Apothecary." Fors sighed while smiling.

She had a rather languid demeanor.

After making the decision, Audrey and the rest wrote their requests on pieces of paper and handed them over to the facilitator. They looked on as the facilitator made his way around the venue and asked the other participants, collecting several other slips of paper.

This facilitator then shuffled the notes and handed them over to his partner in charge of the blackboards, asking him to transcribe the information onto them.

"I need the formulas for potions Spectator and Telepathist, the price will be negotiated face-to-face..."

The facilitator would repeat the request three times after he wrote it onto the blackboard. If someone was interested, they could apply for a room in secret. There would be facilitators helping them complete the deal.

After waiting for a while, Audrey and Glaint didn't receive a request for a deal. They were rather disappointed.

At this moment, a facilitator walked over to Audrey's side and handed her a folded piece of paper.

"It's from Mr. A," the facilitator said softly.

Audrey unfolded the slip of paper and took a look.

“Are you interested in the formulas of other Sequence 9 potions?”

Audrey curled the ends of her mouth disdainfully and wrote on a blank spot: “I am only interested in Spectator.”

She folded the piece of paper and handed it back to the facilitator, then watched as he passed it back to Mr. A.

Mr. A took a glance and didn’t say anything, continuing to look over the rest of the members silently.

But Audrey sharply noticed that he had secretly burned the piece of paper and allowed the ashes to fall to the floor.

Fifteen minutes later, Mr. A said, “Now we will have a break. You can interact with other participants freely.”

At this moment, the young man who sold Emperor Roselle’s diary approached Audrey and said in excitement, “I have already deciphered a portion of Emperor Roselle’s special characters and tattooed them onto myself, allowing me to gain some remarkable abilities.

“Are you interested?”

Audrey suddenly recalled that she had asked Mr. Fool if the special characters in Emperor Roselle’s diary possessed any unique abilities. Mr. Fool’s answer was that they were useless unless a deity suddenly took interest in them.

She looked at the young man in front of her and thought for a moment. She then probed, “What remarkable abilities?”

The young man answered excitedly, “I have become stronger and more healthy!”

Audrey looked at him in pity. “I’m sorry, I have more trust in my own research.”

In the remaining time, she continued observing those who came to this gathering, but didn’t obtain any more information. All she had was a rough deduction that some of them were doctors or lawyers, ordinary occupations.

Audrey and the rest left the venue after another half an hour and returned to Viscount Glaint’s mansion as they waited till the ball ended.

Audrey returned home at about 10 that night. She was about to get her maidservant to prepare some hot water when she saw her dog Susie shoot her a look.

My dog just shot me a look... Audrey’s emotions became complicated.

She found an excuse for her maidservant to leave them alone temporarily. Audrey locked the door and looked back at her golden retriever, Susie, who she wasn't sure could still be considered as her pet.

"You heard... Uh, or came across something?"

Susie sat steadily and howled, reverberating the air around her.

"Yes, I heard the Count's discussion with a few Members of Parliament in the study. They said that the King and the Prime Minister came to a mutual agreement; they will give up their revenge plan on the Feysac Empire in Balam's East Coast for the time being. Where's Balam's East Coast?"

Susie's terrifying speed at grasping Loen made Audrey feel mixed emotions. She fell silent for a few seconds before she said, "I'll give you a map tomorrow..."

"Okay~" Susie replied in delight. "The King and the Prime Minister believe that presently the most pertinent task is to push for the reformation, which will allow civil servants to be selected via examination. They hope to pass the bill through the House of Lords and the House of Commons before October." "Really?" Audrey asked, pleasantly surprised.

That was the first matter that she had managed to secretly guide after she became a Spectator. Turning it into reality would give her a sense of achievement!

Susie answered frankly, "I can't give you a definite answer. This is just what I've heard, I couldn't even fully understand what they meant. After all, I'm a dog that just started to learn."

Audrey was stunned for a moment before she beamed and said, "Susie, you did well! This is your reward!"

She took out a bag from a lavish cabinet, tore open the seal, and placed it before Susie.

It was a dog biscuit produced by the Backlund Pet Care Company which was made of flour, vegetables, meat, and water. It was a snack that Susie really liked.

Susie sat straight and sniffed. She waved her paw, seemingly deciding how she was to consume it to suit her present identity the best.

After a few seconds, she gave up thinking, adhered to her instinct, and leaped forward. She grabbed the bag of snacks and ran outside.

She stood on her hind legs and opened the door with one claw. Then ran out and hid in the shadows and began enjoying her snack.

...

On Sunday, Klein didn't wake up until the afternoon, because he had spent the night on duty at Chanis Gate. Klein took the trackless public carriage and arrived at Evil Dragon Bar.

He had previously planned to use divination to find Monster Ademisaul and determine the reason for his recent oddity. However, he was interrupted by the loss of control of a Mandated Punisher and could only reschedule it to today.

He went through the billiard room and entered the underground market. Klein didn't need to search for he immediately saw Ademisaul shivering in a corner.

When the pale-looking young man with black, messy, oily hair sensed Klein's approach, he suddenly covered his eyes and leaned against the wall in an attempt to move towards the side door.

Klein quickened his pace and blocked Ademisaul from leaving. He tapped the left molars twice secretly.

In his Spirit Vision, Ademisaul's aura appeared rather unhealthy. All the colors seemed dim. In other words, although he didn't have any major diseases, his body was very weak.

At the same time, Klein realized that vibrant fear and anxiety were revealed in the monster's emotions. He had lost almost all of the blue that represented rational thinking.

The surface of his Astral Projection extended from the depths of his Ether Body. The color was a unified, transparent, and colorless, just like pure light. Is this the uniqueness of a naturally-born "Monster"? Klein nodded indiscernibly as he stared at Ademisaul's face and said, "What did you see recently? What did you come across? Why are you hiding in a corner and quivering while saying that there are all corpses and that everyone is dead?"

Ademisaul lowered his head and looked towards his toes. It seemed like he didn't dare to look directly at the person before him.

He was shivering almost violently in his grayish-blue trousers and ragged linen shirt. He replied in a fluster, "No, I didn't see anything. N-no, I only had a dream. There's blood everywhere in the dream and corpses scattered everywhere. Haha! Boohoo! I was among the corpses! I was there! I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die! I don't want to die, I don't want to die!"

He laughed and he cried. His reply confused Klein.

Klein massaged his temples and lowered his voice to ask again, "Why are you afraid of me?"

Ademisaul was taken aback for a few seconds when he suddenly squatted down. He yelled in extreme fear, "No!

"No!"

...

Everyone looked over and Klein suddenly felt awkward.

I didn't do anything to you... Why are you screaming as though something happened! He laughed dryly. He saw that Ademisaul had curled up in a trembling fetal position. Besides begging for mercy, he didn't say anything else. Klein had no choice but to distance himself and pretend that he was just passing by.

Hmm, maybe I should ask Mr. Azik for advice. But he just went on vacation to the northern part of the Feysac Empire last week, and he'll only return next Thursday or Friday. Before that, I have to first report to Captain... Klein covered his mouth as he yawned. He turned and left the underground market.

After he got his salary that week, his private stash returned to eight pounds ten soli. However, truly rare Beyonder ingredients were so expensive that he could only window shop. Of course, if he wasn't afraid of the high interest, he could get a short-term loan from Swain.

When he exited Evil Dragon Bar and waited for the public carriage, Klein considered the future developments.

In another week, the twelve pounds from my advance salary at the beginning will be cleared. The money that I bring home will finally reach three pounds a week. Melissa will have no excuse about delaying the hiring of a maidservant... The other three pounds will remain a secret, and I'll save up more money for myself...

And I have to quickly get the Telepathist formula or related clues from Daxter Guderian. I can use the excuse of giving an underling funds to exchange it for cash from Miss Justice... This could be done through an anonymous bank transfer. During the process, I'll cause interference via divination. That will be very safe and it won't reveal my identity...

...

After getting on a public carriage, Klein didn't head to the Blackthorn Security Company directly but planned on heading to the Divination Club for two hours.

It was part of the work needed to foreshadow his digestion of the potion.

Plus, Klein was now considered famous in the divination industry. There were returning customers from the past and there were also referrals. On average, he would have more than ten divinations in an afternoon.

Hence, even though he only went twice a week, he could still make a profit of half a pound. To the impoverished Mr. Fool, it was better than nothing.

Sigh, it's a pity that I made it sound too good at the beginning and fostered too perfect of an image. I can't just change my divination fees as I wish... While sitting in the meeting room at the Divination Club, Klein thought to himself helplessly as he drank his Sibe black tea.

With his present fame, people would still seek his services even if he charged four soli.

However, as a Seer that respected fate, he could only continue to charge eight pence.

Although Klein had fully digested the potion, he wasn't willing to take the risk of going against the Seer principles that he previously summarized. That included not obtaining excessive benefits from divination. After all, he didn't know if it would lead to losing control or other negative effects.

The confidential information the Nighthawks had didn't include the concept of "digesting." Thus, Klein couldn't determine if there was still risks after fully digesting the potion, or if he could do anything that was against the principle.

Just as he was thinking about these things, the beautiful attendant named Angelica came in and walked over to him. She leaned down and softly said, "Mr. Moretti, someone wishes for your divination. Red Agate room."

"Alright." Klein had checked if it was a suitable day to visit the Divination Club before he came, and he had obtained a definite answer from his divination.

He took his silk top hat, exited the meeting room, and saw his customer that was waiting at the door of the Red Agate Room.

The customer was a maiden around sixteen years old. She was wearing a light blue ruffled dress and holding a gauze hat of the same color. She had brown curly hair, a cute face with baby fat, and a pair of beautiful light blue eyes.

"Elizabeth?" Klein recognized his sister's good friend, Elizabeth, who studied at the Ivos Public School.

He had once helped pick an amulet for her and also resolved Selena's magic mirror divination incident with her assistance.

Similarly, Elizabeth said in pleasant surprise, "Mr. Moretti, it's really you? I was wondering if it was you when I saw the name."

"I am a mysticism enthusiast after all," Klein explained helplessly. Then he added, "Don't tell Melissa. Oh, Selena as well."

The divination result showed that it was suitable for me to visit the Divination Club! Why did I run into Elizabeth? He shook his head as he turned around to open the door to the Red Agate room.

At the same time, he clicked his left molar twice.

They entered the room slowly. After he took the seat of the diviner, he lifted his head to look towards Elizabeth.

With just one glance, his creased his eyebrows.

There was a faint layer of gloomy green in the maiden's energy field!

A symptom of being haunted by spirits and wraiths... Klein made a calm judgment and asked directly, "Have you had nightmares recently, ones with repetitive elements?"

Elizabeth, who had just locked the door and had yet to take a seat, was dumbstruck. It took her a long time to reply, "Yes... That's why I came here to look for you."

Klein leaned back and asked, "What kind of dream did you have? When did it start?"

"It began from the last two days of my vacation to Lamud Town. Oh, our family has an estate there." Elizabeth was considered half a mysticism enthusiast, so she had better memories of such situations. "In my dream, I always run into a knight in full black armor. He carries a huge broadsword and his face is fully covered by a helmet, so all I could see is a pair of glowing red eyes. In the dream, he keeps attempting to get closer to me. Afraid, I run away, but the distance shortens each and every time..."

Klein thought and asked, "Two or three days before you had such a dream, did you get in touch with any antiques, ancient ruins, burial objects, or a mausoleum?"

Elizabeth recalled and answered, "I-I visited a mountain near Lamud Town. There was an abandoned ancient castle."

That's a standard opening of a paranormal novel... Klein lampooned silently as he pressed on, "Did you leave anything behind in the castle? Or did you take anything from the castle?"

Elizabeth creased her beautiful eyebrows and answered moments later in uncertainty, "I got cut by brambles and bled... Does leaving blood behind count?"

Klein nodded with a mask of solemnity and answered in a deep voice, "Yes."

Elizabeth immediately turned nervous after hearing Klein's reply. Subconsciously, she began to speak faster.

"Can you help me divine the specific reason? It will be even better if you can divine a way to solve this..."

Divination can only give us a general direction of how to solve the problem, and furthermore, it will be unclear and filled with symbolism, making it difficult to decipher the hints correctly... Of course, you're very lucky, I'm not an ordinary Seer, I'm a true mysticism scholar! Klein lampooned the girl's question before saying solemnly, "Since this matter has to do with dreams, I would suggest a similar divination method."

"Alright, alright." Elizabeth nodded her head like a hungry woodpecker.

Klein maintained his professional attitude. "I will need you to sleep here and allow that dream to present itself. Is that a problem?"

"There's no problem, I trust you," Elizabeth answered without hesitation while pursing her lips.

But she quickly added with a stammer, "B-but, I cannot guarantee that I would... I would have that dream."

"It's just an attempt," Klein consoled her with a gentle smile.

He then pointed at the long sofa on the side of the Red Agate room. "Please."

"No, no need for that, I'll sleep here." Elizabeth shook her head gently. She crossed her arms and said, "I sleep like this at school after classes whenever I feel tired."

She used her arms as a pillow and leaned forward onto the edge of the table.

"Alright, you can pretend that I'm not here." Klein smiled as he observed the colors of her aura and emotions. He used them to deduce if the girl had fallen asleep or not.

"Okay." Elizabeth closed her eyes and buried her face into her arms, trying hard to ease her breathing.

Klein didn't speak as he leaned back into his chair. The room suddenly became unusually quiet.

It was a peaceful silence, a silence that could make one forget their troubles.

Sometime later, Klein took out a semicircular piece of silver from his pocket after he confirmed that Elizabeth had fallen asleep. The piece of silver was filled with indecipherable Hermes phrases as well as symbolic imagery and numbers.

It was a Dream Charm that Klein had succeeded in making the previous morning!

He had also finished making two Slumber Charms and two Requiem Charms. The former were made with rectangular pieces of silver while the latter were made with triangular pieces. This was to help him differentiate between them solely by touch during an intense battle.

"Crimson!" Klein softly recited the phrase in ancient Hermes.

This was the activation incantation that he had set. Since there was still the step of injecting spirituality into the charm, there was no need for his incantation to be different from the rest. All it needed was to be short and easy to remember.

The mysterious incantation reverberated around the room. Klein felt the Dream Charm become light in his hand, as if it had temporarily lost its weight.

Klein immediately placed the charm on the table in front of him after he injected it with his spirituality.

A transparent flame leapt up silently, enveloping the charm and became a deep, serene black.

The black flames spread quickly, enveloping Elizabeth and Klein.

Klein seized the opportunity to enter his state of Cogitation. He used his spirituality to look at the illusory spherical light in front of him.

The spherical light was surrounded by a boundless darkness, making it seem exceptionally lonely.

Klein didn't dare delay any further as he emitted his spirituality, allowing it to touch the illusory ball of light.

Silently, the scene around him started to coruscate and warp, but it quickly settled into a yellowish-brown plain. The plain was littered with the corpses of horses and humans. Fresh blood and weapons could be seen everywhere.

Elizabeth was wearing a regal gown with engageantes and a fishnet hat. She was looking around, lost.

She quickly saw Klein's figure and revealed a look of surprise and joy.

"Mr. Moretti, we meet again! I had suspected that the Klein Moretti on the name register was you when Selena and I came to get a divination. I came again multiple times, but always missed you as I had to attend lessons during the day...

"When I was free during the summer break, I was dragged to a holiday at Lamud Town by my parents...

"You can help me right?"

Klein froze for a moment when he heard the girl's talkativeness.

To think that Elizabeth had suspected that I was working parttime at the Divination Club and tried to find me on multiple occasions...

Yet, she didn't appear abnormal at all!

Hmm, her surprise was authentic, masking her true thoughts...

Indeed, everyone's dream shows their most honest side, other than me, Mr. Fool.

As he was indulging in his thoughts, Elizabeth's dream changed. A tall knight, about 1.9 meters in height, was walking toward them, dragging a broadsword which was scraped the ground.

This knight was dressed in black armor. The metallic sounds of metal colliding could be heard with his every step. Two blobs of red light akin to flames peeked out from the slit of his faceplate; they were staring at Klein and Elizabeth intently.

The will of a wraith... Still not at the stage of an evil spirit. Klein, who was in his spirituality state, didn't need to activate his Spirit Vision.

According to the classifications based on the Nighthawks' confidential information, the feelings of vengeance and injustice left behind by spirits were the weakest and easiest kinds of souls to deal with. Following those were shadows and wraiths. Evil spirits were the most difficult soul-like creatures to deal with. The most horrifying of evil spirits were said to be as strong as High-Sequence Beyonders.

With this in mind, Klein took a step forward, blocking Elizabeth behind him. He then stomped down with his foot and shattered the dream.

Multiple specks of light scattered like fireflies. Klein's spirituality returned to his body, allowing his eyes to once again adapt to the darkness of the Red Agate room. He saw the tools needed for divination placed around the table, as well as the Dream Charm that had almost finished burning.

Klein felt the pinch when he saw this. Charms in the Evernight Goddess's domain were all made using pure silver, so it pained his heart.

Using these charms is akin to burning money! Even if I don't account for my labor costs, the materials alone already averaged to about six to eight soli per charm!

Well, he felt a little more at peace when he thought of the Beyonders from the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. After all, they burned gold—the corresponding metal for the Sun was gold.

Elizabeth groaned softly and slowly woke up before straightening her posture.

She glanced furtively at Klein and asked, “Mr. Moretti, were there any results from your divination?”

“Yes.” Klein nodded seriously. “Your nightmares should disappear in no more than a week.”

I will report this to the Captain and get him to send someone to deal with it at Lamud Town... Klein added in his heart.

“Really? That’s great! Thank you Mr. Moretti!” Elizabeth became excited. She then suddenly creased her brows.

“What’s the matter?” Klein asked in concern.

“Nothing. I just remembered that I have to go home now.” She slowly took out a single soli bill that she had prepared and placed it on the table. She then grabbed her hat and bade goodbye to Klein a little hesitantly.

After leaving the Red Agate room, Elizabeth walked toward the stairs outside the door. She flailed her arms after she confirmed that no one was watching and groaned softly, “Pins and needles! How numbing...”

...

In the Blackthorn Security Company, Dunn rubbed his forehead as he looked at Klein.

“Did you suddenly return because you came across another supernatural incident?”

Hey, Captain, what’s with that tone of disparagement... Klein cleared his throat and answered without hesitation, “Yes.”

“What’s the matter this time?” Dunn Smith rubbed his forehead again.

Klein organized his words and replied, “Two things. For the first incident, I discovered ‘Monster’ Ademisaul hunched in a corner, shivering in fear when I was buying materials for my charms at the underground market.”

When he said that, he hinted heavily that he needed a reimbursement for the materials.

Klein couldn’t mention the fees for the detective he employed to find Daxter Guderian, for it involved the red chimney. He deeply regretted not employing separate detectives.

Dunn seemed to fail to read between the lines as he nodded slightly.

“What happened to Ademisaul?”

Klein exhaled silently and described in detail, “Ademisaul had a dream. He dreamed that there were corpses and blood everywhere. One of the corpses was his, and thus he became very frightened.”

Dunn thought for a moment before asking slowly, “As a Seer, what do you think it symbolizes?”

“A disaster. A disaster that spans a wide area. But I have no information other than this. Furthermore, not everything in Ademisaul’s dream might have a symbolic meaning,” Klein said while deliberating his words.

“I will report this to the Holy Cathedral and see what they have to say.” Dunn shook his head and said in a self-deprecating manner, “This isn’t something I have expertise in.”

Klein didn’t have any other ideas either. He changed the subject and spoke about the wraith harassment Elizabeth faced.

“Lamud Town... Is that lady a believer of the Goddess?” Dunn asked.

“Yes.” Klein gave an affirmative answer.

“Then there should be no problems. Let’s head over to Lamud Town now and try to get dinner there. Oh, and bring Frye along.

His abilities should prove useful if the incident involves corpses and ghosts.” Dunn massaged his temples and tried his hardest to contemplate whether he had forgotten anything.

If Elizabeth wasn’t a believer of the Evernight Goddess, then they would have to hand her over to the Mandated Punishers or the Machinery Hivemind according to her faith. If her faith didn’t lie in any of the three major Churches, then she would be handed over to the Machinery Hivemind who were responsible for the outskirts.

Klein didn’t speak. He waited silently for a while before finally hearing Dunn add, “Also, we have three men on the mission. We can request to use Sealed Artifact 3-0782.”

“3-0782?” After a minute, Klein recalled that the Sealed Artifact was called the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

This Sacred Emblem’s Beyonder influence seemed to be able to last a long time. It had the ability to constantly purify any corpses and spirits in a fifteen-meter radius. However, it had the drawback of purifying the soul of a commoner at the same time. Research data indicated that if a normal human were to stand within its radius for an hour, they would become an idiot that only knew how to praise the Sun. The limit for Beyonders was six hours.

As for ghosts and corpses, they would scatter in less than a minute.

Hmm, to think that the Captain would remember the codename for this Sealed Artifact... Damn, I feel that my memory is worse than his... Klein suddenly froze, nearly wanting to hang himself.

Dunn Smith leaned back and looked at Klein with his deep gray eyes.

“You went to the Divination Club again today? Did you feel any changes over the past two days?”

Captain, that's the exact question I wanted you to ask! Klein nodded seriously.

"I feel even better. I even believe that I can pass the Holy Cathedral's examination right now. It's a kind of feeling and confidence that can't be described with words."

Realizing that his answer could be a little vague, he couldn't help but add, "Perhaps the name of a potion is really crucial. When I strictly followed the Seer principles that I derived and acted as a fortune-teller, everything became perfect and easy. Yes, I can now activate my Spirit Vision with an even more inconspicuous manner."

Dunn creased his eyebrows slightly as the light in his eyes converged, he muttered seemingly deep in thought,"The name of the potion..."

After about ten seconds, he looked at Klein again.

"Do you need to return and inform your family? Sunday is the second day after your duty at Chanis Gate. You're supposed to get some rest."

Taking into consideration the fact that Elizabeth was a good friend of his sister, and that he had promised that the problem would be solved within a week, Klein answered without hesitation, "We don't have to waste time. After we set off, just get the carriage to take a turn by Daffodil Street."

"Alright. Get Frye while I fill out the application form to get Sealed Artifact 3-0782 out." Dunn pointed at the break room diagonally opposite.

Frye was a Corpse Collector, so he didn't possess the abundant energy of a Sleepless. If he was free, he would take a nap.

Filling in the application form yourself, approving it yourself, and collecting it yourself... Captain, our management system is quite flawed... Klein lampooned silently before he retrieved his hat and exited Dunn's office to knock on the door diagonally opposite.

After Klein knocked thrice, Frye opened the door and looked at Klein with undisguised puzzlement.

"What's the matter?"

As he was taking a nap, his hair was messy and his shirt was untidy. His cold and gloomy temperament faded quite a bit.

However, he still looks like a dead person that climbed out of his coffin... Klein hid his smile and answered seriously,

"There's a case that involves wraiths. The Captain wishes for your assistance."

"Okay." Frye lifted his hand subconsciously to smooth out his messy hair, returning him to the cold person that kept the living at bay.

After he dressed up, the two of them waited by the sofa in the reception hall. The surroundings warmed up after another seven or eight minutes, as though the area was being exposed to sunlight.

Immediately following that, they saw Dunn Smith walk through the partition while he held in his hand an ancient badge about half the size of a palm.

The badge had a dark gold luster and was engraved with the symbolic signs of the Sun and lines that extended to the edge. It was the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from the Intis Republic, originally named the "Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem."

The Intis Republic was the country that Roselle transformed from an empire into a republic before turning it back into an empire. Now, it had established itself as a stable republic and was located on the west coast of the Northern Continent. Its border with the Loen Kingdom included landmarks like Midseashires, the Hornacis mountain range, and so on.

Since the establishment of Intis as a nation, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun had repressed the Church of the God of Craftsmanship which later became known as the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. With it being the main religion of the country, the country could also be referred to as the Kingdom of the Sun.

“Let’s set off. Frye, you’ll drive. Cesare can’t withstand the purification of the Sacred Emblem for too long,” Dunn reminded them calmly.

Cesare Francis was a clerk who was in charge of purchasing and collecting supplies. He was also their driver, but he was just an ordinary person. He couldn’t stay more than an hour within a fifteen-meter range of Sealed Artifact 3-0782. The journey from Zouteland Street to Lamud Town, according to Klein’s understanding, would require at least two and a half hours. That didn’t include the time to detour to Daffodil Street.

“Alright.” Frye didn’t object but checked if he had his personal items with him.

...

When the rays of the setting sun dyed the pinnacle of the town’s cathedral, the Nighthawks’ carriage finally arrived at Lamud Town.

The town was located at the northwest edge of Tingen. Many buildings still had the unique characteristics of the era before the Age of Steam. There were nearly zero factories and the nearby villages engaged in commercial trading.

After they stopped the carriage, Dunn looked at the hair salon opposite and said,

“I asked one of the locals earlier. It only requires a fifteenminute walk from here to the castle ruins on the mountain. It’s said that it belonged to a feudal lord who ruled during the Fourth Epoch. However, no one knows what happened after that. Of course, their description is merely a local myth.”

“Yes, let’s go over now and deal with that wraith before the sky turns dark. Then, we can take turns to watch over 3-0782 and keep it away from commoners?”

From the moment Dunn retrieved the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem, three hours had already passed. It was getting closer and closer to a Beyonder’s limits. In no time, they would have to part ways and give each other time to recover.

“Okay.” Frye gave a succinct reply.

“I have no problem about that.” Klein touched the Slumber Charms and Requiem Charms in his pocket.

The three Nighthawks in thin black trench coats walked through the street in the town and headed toward the mountain when they reached a fork in the road. Along the way, the road was overgrown with weeds and clustered with shrubs, but it was still spacious enough to let two carriages pass side-by-side.

It wasn’t long until they saw a collapsed outer wall of an ancient castle. On the outer wall that was still standing, there were green plants crawling all over it while the exposed part was mottled.

When he started to get close, Klein could feel a piercing chill as goosebumps formed all over his arms.

“There really is a wraith,” Frye said monotonously as he looked at the ancient castle.

Dunn looked sideways to steal a glance at the newly promoted Nighthawk, then he laughed and said, “Don’t worry. We have both 3-0782 and Frye; the wraith won’t cause too much of a problem.”

He held his custom-made revolver in one hand and the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem in the other. He took the first step towards the ancient castle that looked like a ruin.

Klein followed closely behind and prepared to pull the trigger at any time, swing his cane, or use his charms.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

When Dunn was less than five meters away from the ancient castle, where a broken horse stable, water well, and other fixtures were reflected in Klein's eyes, a cold breeze howled in a way that could only be described as sad and shrill. It seemed to be rejecting the uninvited guests.

The three Nighthawks didn't stop. The warm and pure feeling gradually dispersed the chill and conquered the front of the ancient castle.

They scaled the pile of rocks, passing through the collapsed outer wall before slowly entering the castle which had lost its main entrance and was filled with broken tiles.

The hall of the ancient castle was full of collapsed stone pillars and was covered with moss. It was spacious, but the windows were narrow and placed high on the walls. Hence, the lighting was poor. It looked dim and gloomy inside.

That's also a trait of buildings from the end of the Fourth Epoch and the beginning of the Fifth Epoch... Klein, who was a historian, instinctively made a judgment and activated his Spirit Vision.

Just then, an illusory yet piercing roar suddenly burst out. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a thick cloud of black fog filled the air, resisting the infiltration of warmth and purity.

A tall figure suddenly surfaced amidst the black fog. He wore full-body, black armor and carried a broadsword that a commoner would have found difficult to lift.

The wraith looked identical to the one Klein saw in Elizabeth's dream. Two flame-like balls of red light shone through the gap of his helmet, appearing cold, but they were staring at the three Nighthawks angrily.

"You have disturbed my slumber! You will have to pay with your flesh and blood!" He suddenly launched himself forward and instantly shortened the distance to Dunn. He suddenly slashed downwards with his broadsword.

Dunn retreated swiftly and lifted his hand to fire his revolver.

Clang!

The silver demon hunting bullet didn't manage to penetrate the illusory black armor and only produced a crisp but unrealistic sound.

Klein and Frye retreated to the side simultaneously. One held a gun in one hand and aimed at the two balls of fire that took the place of the black-armored knight's eyes before pulling the trigger. The other Nighthawk transformed his eyes into a tranquil grayish-white and focused on the wraith.

The black-armored knight roared in anger again. He took another huge stride towards Dunn and swung the broadsword horizontally.

Bam!

The broadsword didn't hurt Dunn, but it knocked him away, causing him to land heavily by the side of the door. It left him spewing a mouthful of fresh blood.

With a loud thud, 3-0782 dropped on the ground. Since it was wearing a metal boot, the wraith eagerly kicked with its right leg and sent the dangerous badge out the ancient castle's door. It was a distance beyond fifteen meters from it.

Klein, who hadn't managed to shoot the wraith successfully, became nervous and puzzled when he saw that scene. It was as though he was overlooking the transformation before his eyes from a calm and rational position.

Bang!

He fired another bullet. The silver demon hunting bullet hit the wraith's helmet and produced sparks. But there was no obvious damage.

“Right gauntlet!” Frye shouted. He was always cold and gloomy, but now his tone was filled with anxiety.

No sooner had he finished talking, he lifted his revolver as well and aimed at the wraith’s right metal gauntlet.

Bang! Bang! Klein shot sub-consciously according to Frye’s instruction, firing silver demon hunting bullets almost simultaneously with him.

This time, the wraith didn’t block it with his armor but raised his broadsword and struck the two bullets away.

Bam! He took a stride and charged at Klein, colliding with him directly.

As Klein flew out, he saw his chest cave in, saw himself spitting blood, but he didn’t feel uncomfortable, not one bit.

He suddenly snapped out of his daze, fell on the ground, rolled about, and screamed.

Suddenly, the ancient castle, the wraith, the collapsed pillars, and the moss floor shattered eerily. Everything returned to black fog in the air, just like when the black-armored knight first appeared.

The only difference was that Dunn held both his fists tightly, bowed slightly, and his gray eyes were dark and deep.

As expected, everything was just a dream. Captain pulled the wraith, Frye, and I into his dream at the same time. But I’m special, and I can remain clear-headed and rational... Klein realized that he was still standing two meters away to Dunn’s right. He hadn’t vomited any blood or screamed.

Just then, Dunn stood up straight and looked at the wraith that was going to slash with his sword. He calmly said, “It’s been more than a minute.”

The wraith was stunned and let out a shrill cry. Its body started producing black steam, as though it had just received its death sentence.

Any zombies or spirits that had yet to turn into evil spirits couldn’t stay within the fifteen-meter range of the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem for more than a minute!

Holy shit, Captain, you’re so cool! Klein looked at the scene from the side and nearly let out a cheer!

Dunn had used his dream ability not to attack the wraith on his own turf, but merely to drag out the time!

In the warm and pure feeling, the black steam evaporated quickly and the chill dispersed gradually. In no time, the knight became transparent and blended into the void.

Clang!

A black gauntlet fell to the ground, its surface covered with white frost.

Klein was about to ask for the Captain’s go ahead to pick up the “drop,” but when he looked over, his spirituality was suddenly disturbed.

Somewhere near the stairs that separated the hall and the dining hall, there was an intense yet illusory misery and uncleanliness summoning him!

"There's some sort of problem there," Klein said with a serious tone, pointing at the steps separating the living room and dining room.

He once read in the Nighthawks' confidential records that if similar situations appeared in one's spiritual perception, it usually implied that there was something evil and corrupted hidden at the target location. It was best not to interact with it if one wasn't confident; otherwise, one might lose their life. Sometimes, even a mere glance could result in irreversible damage.

Dunn looked over, and similarly, with his high spiritual perception, he immediately sensed something wrong. He turned to look at Klein and instructed calmly, "Divine and see if we would be successful in our investigation."

Captain didn't get me to divine before we entered the castle. He was rather confident... That means that he believes that the hidden thing might be more dangerous than the wraith. Klein nodded in silence. He holstered his revolver and handed his cane to Frye.

He then released the topaz bracelet within his sleeve, held the silver chain with his left hand and silently recited a suitable statement.

Instantly, his eyes darkened as a breeze started spiraling around him.

"The investigation of the hidden place in the ancient castle would be successful.

"The investigation of the hidden place in the ancient castle would be successful."

...

After reciting the statement seven times, Klein's eyes regained their normal color. He saw the dangling topaz rotating clockwise.

It wasn't very obvious, but it was unmistakably rotating clockwise!

That meant that the investigation would be successful.

Klein, who was already a true Seer, immediately nodded at Dunn and Frye.

"The danger will be manageable by us, or there could be no danger at all."

Dunn pinned the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem to the left side of his chest, then pressed down on his hat. He briskly walked toward the steps and expertly started searching for a mechanism.

Frye, who had picked up the gauntlet, handed Klein's cane back to him. He grabbed his revolver and cautiously scanned the surroundings, as if he was afraid that an enemy would suddenly appear.

I'm still not professional enough... as a Nighthawk... Klein geared himself up and took out his revolver, and turned alert as well.

A few minutes later, it was unknown what the kneeling Dunn Smith triggered as heavy sputtering sounds emanated from the staircase.

The floor split open, revealing a set of steps heading down. A cold and corrupted vibe emanated, seemingly condensing into something corporeal.

Dunn glanced over and removed Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from his chest. He tossed it directly into the trap door.

After a few clanks, it was unknown where the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem stopped.

If there are dead spirits within, they would definitely toss 3-0782 back out... That would be interesting... Klein stared at the stairs and waited patiently.

The lingering sinister and corrupted feeling soon dissolved away like snow meeting the sun. Warmness and purity blanketed the entrance of the trap door.

“Klein, go down with me. Frye will stay here and prevent other enemies from destroying the mechanism.” Dunn made an experienced decision.

“Alright.” Klein didn’t shrink back from the task. He took two steps forward and arrived next to Dunn. Frye nodded, not letting his guard down.

Dunn went down first, his footsteps reverberating in the silence.

He didn’t prepare any sources of light, for a Beyonder that went down the Sleepless pathway, the darkness was not an obstacle, but a blessing.

Their vision wasn’t hindered by such an environment.

After taking a few steps down, Dunn suddenly turned around and looked at Klein. “I forgot that you don’t have night vision. I’m not used to preparing objects that provide illumination...”

“...Captain, you don’t need to mind about me. I have my Spirit Vision.” Klein realized that he wasn’t shocked at all.

That cool Captain from before was indeed not normal!

In his Spirit Vision, the darkness before him was screened by a gray film. Even though it was very blurry, it was enough for him to make out where the steps were.

Well, the Captain sure is healthy, and his mental state is fine too... Klein carefully extended his feet and made his way down slowly.

The flight of steps wasn’t long. It only took about fifteen steps to reach the ground.

Sealed Artifact 3-0782 was lying there, releasing its purity and warmth. It also radiated a faint glow.

Klein could see much more clearly with the help of the illumination. He surveyed the surroundings and noticed that it wasn’t a huge basement. It was no longer cold and sinister, but the dampness remained.

In the middle of the basement was a black coffin, with dark red nails driven into the lid.

The lid of the coffin had been pushed open slightly, allowing one to see a headless corpse that was all bone.

Dunn looked around, then bent over to pick up the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

“Captain, this coffin... It was intended to prevent the dead within from becoming a zombie or a wraith.”

Klein looked at the dark red nails in the coffin and the formation they were in. He used his decent mysticism knowledge to determine that this was an ancient ritual to prevent anything the corpse from reanimating.

At the same time, he muttered inwardly. *But under normal circumstances, who would have nothing better to do than guard against their loved one from reanimating? Hmm, the people who helped bury the corpse must not be family... And if they placed the coffin in the basement instead of a tomb, they must have been afraid of someone finding the corpse...*

Dunn, who had worn Sealed Artifact 3-0782 again, approached the coffin and inspected it.

“The deceased was probably poisoned to death.”

“That means the person who poisoned him must have used ritualistic magic to prevent him from reanimating and seeking revenge. This should have happened about 1300 years ago? He became a wraith in the end... The resentment of this spirit is simply shocking!” Klein also walked in front of the coffin. “Where is his head? That ritual does not call for the head to be sliced off...”

Dunn thought for a moment before saying, “I have a deduction. This wraith didn’t exist all the time and only appeared recently. It’s only a fifteen-minute walk from the town to the castle. Throughout

the years, troublemakers must have frequented this place, but before this incident, there were no rumors of there being a wraith in this ancient castle." Klein nodded indiscernibly.

"Captain, what you mean to say is that someone came here recently, opened the coffin, and took away the head of the deceased?"

"Yes, the ritual prevents the corpse from reanimating, but it also seals and preserves its resentment within the coffin. When the coffin was opened and the ritual dispelled, this resentment quickly evolved into a wraith with the help of its gauntlet..."

"There's no corpse of the person who opened the coffin, so he's not an ordinary person... Besides, why did he take away the head of the deceased?"

Dunn stared at the skeleton in the coffin. "For resentment to be preserved for such a long time, there should be some reason other than the ritual. He could've been a Beyonder when he was alive, perhaps a descendant one or two generations removed of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder. I am talking about the Mid-Sequencers as defined in the past, Sequence 5 or 6.

"And such corpses are always special. His head might be usable in some kind of ritual or in some other occasion."

Dunn paused before continuing, "What I said just now was all conjecture. But we can try to verify some of it. We can split up later in town and investigate to see if anyone was injured before in their youth. Well, if they are still alive, it would prove that the wraith only appeared recently."

"A logical train of thought," Klein praised. He quickly searched the basement but didn't find anything else.

He tried using ritualistic magic to make a sketch of the "guest" that entered the basement, but because it had been more than a month since it happened, as well as the disturbed environment due to the frequent appearance of the wraith, there wasn't much of a result.

He then took Frye's place, allowing the expert on the dead to conduct further tests.

Fifteen minutes later, as the sun was vanishing below the horizon, Dunn and Frye followed the steps and returned to the hall of the ancient palace.

Dunn felt for the switch to the trapdoor while Frye gave a short description, "The deceased was indeed poisoned to death. The traces near the neck appeared recently, at the very most three months back."

This means that it's highly probable that someone came here before... Klein nodded in thought.

The three Nighthawks returned to Lamud Town before it got dark and asked for two rooms at an inn. The member that got the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 was to take this dangerous item for a stroll outside the town where no one would be. They would change their shifts once every two hours, and thus only needed two rooms.

After a simple dinner, Klein, Dunn, and Frye immediately split up and covered all corners of the town, asking the residents who had lived in this town for extended periods of time.

In situations like this, their identification documents as policemen proved useful.

...

"Officer, why are you asking this? I used to head to the abandoned castle to play when I was young... Injured? Definitely, how could a child not have fallen while playing? I remember, yes—I've been cut by a sharp rock on the outer walls of the ancient castle in the past..." A forty-year-old blond man looked puzzledly at Klein, but answered his question honestly.

This was the fourteenth person Klein had asked, of which two vividly remembered being injured in the castle when they were young.

The Captain's deduction is correct... Klein decided as he put away his identification documents. He smiled and said, "Thank you for your cooperation, I have no more questions."

He was about to leave when the forty-year-old man called after him, "Officer, are you interested in the ancient castle? I have an oil painting of the first Baron that resided in there. He was the grandfather of my grandfather of my grandfather... Well, anyway, it was a long time ago. He took away a oil painting from the castle and told me that it was the oil painting of the first Baron Lamud.

"Do you want it? It's a true antique!"

If it was a true antique, your family would have sold it a long time ago... This guy sure is gutsy, daring to fool even the police. Should I scare him with my gun? Klein lampooned and adopted the attitude of a window shopper and said, "Who knows if it's a real antique or not? I'll trust my own judgment.

"Take it out and let me see it."

The blond man smiled and returned to the room and rummaged for it.

Some time later, he walked out with an oil painting in hand.

Klein casually looked at the oil painting. He saw that the baron had gentle features and bronze skin, his eyes hiding an indescribable range of human experience. He was also wearing a white curly wig.

Huh, he looks a lot like Mr. Azik! Klein's eyes suddenly opened wide, his gaze subconsciously falling below the right ear of the baron.

He then looked at the unremarkable mole near the ear.

The position of the mole was exactly the same as Mr. Azik's mole!

This can't be right... How could Mr. Azik be the first in the socalled line of barons, Baron Lamud? This is a figure who lived fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago! No way, how can I be sure that the person in the portrait is the first Baron Lamud? Klein looked at the oil painting, his mind buzzing in confusion. It was like everyone around him had become monsters or a dream where the entire world was filled with gods.

He looked up and stared at the blond middle-aged man. He extended his hand to grab his revolver from his underarm holster and said in a deep voice, "This is not an antique. If you don't clarify the situation, I will arrest you and charge you with fraud!"

He didn't care if prosecution fell under the police department. His only goal was to threaten the man to get information!

At the same time, Klein clicked his left molars twice to activate his Spirit Vision. Then, he looked at his target's emotional color changes.

The blond man jumped in fright and said in a panicked, muffled voice, "No, I'm not sure if it's an antique either. No, I heard that it's an antique, but I don't know much about such things. I really have no idea. I don't even know many words, yea—words."

His eyes darted around anxiously, seemingly about to cry for help.

Just then, he saw Klein adjust his revolver's cylinder and hammer. He looked as though he was going to shoot a suspect that resisted.

He suddenly stood straight and stopped looking around.

"Where did you get the oil painting?" Klein asked heavily.

The blond man's lips quivered as he said with a fawning smile, "Officer, this is what my grandfather found in the ancient castle, more than forty years ago. An outer wall and the room on the second floor collapsed, revealing these items, items that people couldn't find in the past. One of them was the oil painting. No, no, no, not this oil painting. The original oil painting was torn and couldn't be preserved. So, my grandfather found someone to make a copy of the painting. Mm, the one you saw just now, I didn't lie to you. An oil painting from forty years ago could really be considered as an antique..."

"Are you sure that this is the portrait of the first Baron Lamud?" Klein stroked the trigger and made sure the man's gaze didn't move an inch.

The blond man chuckled and said, "I'm not sure, but I'm guessing so."

"Reason?" Klein nearly laughed at the man's shamelessness.

"Because there wasn't any labels on the oil painting," the blond man replied seriously for once. "Just like I'm called the Scoundrel Gray, my father is called the Curly-Haired Gray, and only my grandfather was the real Gray."

Klein exhaled silently and asked, "Where's your grandfather?"

"In the cemetery, he's been buried there for almost two decades. Next to him is my father who was buried three years back," the blond man answered honestly.

After Klein asked a few questions from different angles, he adjusted the cylinder in front of the blond man and put it back into his underarm holster.

He put away his police identification and turned around in his black trench coat before walking towards the motel with his hands stuffed into his pockets. He walked quietly along the street underneath the dim light that was shining out from the houses that lined both sides of the street.

I can't confirm if the portrait is that of the first Baron Lamud... I wonder if the town has the exact historical records of the ancient castle...

Regardless, the man in the portrait must be a person from the past, at least a thousand years ago...

Besides the hair, he looks almost identical to Mr. Azik. Is this what we call reincarnation?

Back when Mr. Azik gave up his position in other universities in Backlund and came to Tingen, perhaps it was driven by instinct...

Hmm, there's another possibility. Such as, the man in the portrait is Mr. Azik and Mr. Azik is him!

Having thought of this, Klein felt a jolt. He nearly stumbled on the steps ahead.

He paced back and forth around a damaged gas street lamp and tried to incorporate his knowledge from the world of information overload. According to his earlier guesses, he made a further inference.

Mr. Azik might have become immortal due to some reasons, such as being a vampire. Could that be why he's survived for so long?

That's not right. When has there ever been a bronze-skinned vampire...

Plus, when I shook hands with Mr. Azik, I could clearly feel his body temperature and the fresh blood that flows within him.

Although he dislikes the heat of the South, he isn't afraid of the sun. He once competed in a rowing competition with other teachers under the hot sun...

Hmm, there's another possibility. Mr. Azik's Sequence potion or some other factors bestowed him with a long life, and the price for it is memory loss! Man, taking into consideration his various dreams, can I presume that he loses his memory as part of a cycle? Every few decades, he forgets his past and gains new life. Then, his dreams are the lives that he has lived before... Heh heh, I think I've read something like that before in a novel...

I can't just rely on divination to verify this. I have to look for the traces of the lives that Mr. Azik lived, traces of him not having a childhood, but starting directly as an adult!

Klein started leaning towards his latter guess. However, he temporarily couldn't eliminate the possibility of reincarnation.

He reined in his chaotic thoughts and considered carefully whether he should inform Captain Dunn about it.

If Mr. Azik was a Beyonder that lived for a thousand years, his ability would be much stronger than I imagined...

He advised me out of kindness. However, it would be hard to say if he will remain kind when I find clues about his past.

But Mr. Azik has been nice to me all this time. To involve the Nighthawks would result in a non-trivial possibility of harming him...

Sigh. It looks like I must divine this matter in the world above the gray fog. This is the most proper choice for a Seer!

Klein made the decision and returned to the hotel quickly.

Since Dunn and Frye had yet to return, he seized the opportunity to get another room at the cost of one soli.

After he entered the room, Klein made a spirituality wall with the assistance of Holy Night Powder. Then, he took four steps counterclockwise, went through the mad ravings, and arrived above the gray fog.

The lofty palace stood tall and silent while the ancient, mottled bronze table and twenty-two high chairs remained the same.

Klein took the seat of honor and made a brown goatskin and black fountain pen appear before him.

He picked up the pen and wrote seriously: “I should tell Dunn Smith about Mr. Azik.”

Then, he took the topaz pendant from his left sleeve and did a spirit pendulum divination.

The spirit pendulum divination resulted in the pendulum spinning counterclockwise, which meant that he shouldn’t tell him!

Putting down the topaz pendant, Klein thought about it and decided to make an attempt with dream divination, just to be sure.

Thus, he changed his divination statement to: “The result of hiding matters related to Mr. Azik from the Nighthawks.”

Klein held the goatskin, recited the statement seven times silently, and leaned backwards to enter a deep sleep.

He saw himself in the illusory, blurry, and distant world. He saw that he was struggling while drowning in a sea of blood.

Then, there was a hand that extended and pulled him up from the blood sea. The owner of the hand was Azik with bronze skin and a small mole near his ear.

The image shattered and reorganized. Klein saw that he was in a dark and gloomy mausoleum. The surrounding coffins opened one after another.

Azik stood next to him, looking forward, as though he was looking for something.

Just then, Klein exited the dream in an instant and saw the illusory, gray, and boundless fog.

The symbolic meaning of the earlier dream is that, if I were to hide the related matters about Mr. Azik, I would receive his assistance when I’m in danger in the future. Heh, the danger might have come about because I helped to keep the secret... What does the last scene mean? I will discover some mausoleum with Mr. Azik? Yes, perhaps the mausoleum has other symbolic meanings... Klein clasped his hands together and supported his chin while he interpreted the contents of the dream divination.

Combining it with the earlier result of the pendulum divination, he decided to not report his inference to the Captain, but merely bring up that a townsfolk had taken out a portrait of the first Baron Lamud, and that the portrait looked like a history teacher in Khoy University. Klein couldn’t be sure that Dunn wouldn’t hear about it elsewhere, so he had to at least mention it.

Of course, Dunn was unfamiliar with Azik and didn’t know of his recount and strange dreams, so he would find it difficult to connect them. Klein even suspected that the Captain wouldn’t quite remember what Azik looked like.

Then, he stopped thinking further and planned to leave the world above the gray fog. Just then, he noticed the crimson star that had been silent all this time was twinkling with faint light again.

Klein extended his spirituality with interest and saw the young man that spoke Jotun again. He saw him kneeling before a pure crystal ball.

The young man was still wearing the black tights that were different from the clothing of countries in the Northern Continent. His facial features were blurry and distorted, but Klein could faintly see his brownish-yellow hair.

He knelt there and prayed with an unusual pain in his tone.

Klein leaned sideways to hear. He relied on his beginner-level Jotun and barely understood what the young man was saying.

“O Magnificent Deity, please cast your eyes on this land that you have forsaken.

“O Magnificent Deity, please allow us, the People of the Dark, be freed from the curse of our destiny.

“I am willing to dedicate my life to you, using my blood to please you.”

...

A land that was forsaken... People of the Dark... Magnificent Deity... Klein murmured the few key words and suddenly thought of a place that The Hanged Man had mentioned once.

The Forsaken Land of God!

It appeared in Roselle's diary too! He even sent out a fleet to search for it, but it was fruitless... Klein squinted his eyes and wondered if he had guessed correctly.

He tapped on the edge of the long bronze table with his fingers. After three taps, he came to a decision. He extended his right hand and touched the illusory crimson star.

The cloud of crimson immediately exploded, and the light flowed in like water.

CHAPTER 137: CITY OF SILVER

City of Silver, Mortuary.

Derrick stood in front of a flight of stairs as he looked straight ahead with reddened eyes. In front of him were two coffins containing his parents.

Embedded in a stone plate in front of him was a simple silver sword. The frequent booming of thunder caused the house to shake and the sword to sway.

The Berg couple inside the coffins weren't completely dead yet. They struggled to keep their eyes open while making weak attempts to heave for air, but in the eyes of some, the luster of their lives could no longer suppress their irreversible darkening.

"Derrick, do it!" An elder dressed in a long black robe looked at the youth and said in a deep voice with a staff in his hand. The expression of the youth was visibly contorted.

"No, no, no!" Derrick, who had brownish-yellow hair, shook his head repeatedly. He took a step back with every word, and finally let out a ear-piercing scream.

Thump!

The elder struck down his staff and said, "Do you wish for the whole city to be buried along with your parents?"

"You should know that we are the People of the Dark who have been forsaken by God. We, we can only live in a cursed place like this and all the dead would become horrifying evil spirits. There's no way to reverse it regardless of what we do, other than —other than ending their lives by the hands of a family member!"

"Why? Why?" Derrick asked in despair, shaking his head. "Why are the citizens of the City of Silver destined to kill their parents the moment they are born..."

The elder closed his eyes, as if recalling what he had experienced in the past. "This is our destiny, this is the curse we must bear, this is the will of God..."

"Draw your sword, Derrick. This is a show of respect for your parents.

"After this, when you have calmed down, you can try becoming a Divine Blood Warrior."

In the coffin, Berg tried to speak, but he could only let out a groan after his chest heaved several times.

Derrick took several steps forward with great difficulty, returning to the side of the silver sword. He extended his shivering right hand.

His brain registered the cold touch of the metal, causing him to recall the Blood Ice his father brought back when he went hunting. Blood Ice the size of a mere palm was enough to keep his home cool for a few days.

Images flashed past his eyes—his stern father teaching sword techniques, his friendly father patting away the dust on his back, his gentle mother mending his clothes, his brave mother stepping in front of him when they encountered a mutated monster, and finally, his family huddling in front of a flickering candle and sharing food...

A faint sound croaked from his throat despite his utmost suppression. With a low grunt, he exerted force with his right hand and drew the sword.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

He lowered his head and charged forward, raising the sword and driving it down with force.

Ah! Blood splattered following a pained scream. The blood splattered onto Derrick's face and into his eyes.

His vision became red. He pulled out the sword and pierced it into the coffin by the side.

After the sharp metal pierced through flesh, Derrick released his grip and wavered as he stood up.

He didn't look at the condition of the people inside the coffin. Derrick stumbled as he ran out of the Mortuary, as if he was being chased by evil spirits. His fists and teeth were clenched tight. The blood on his face left streaks across his face.

The elder who had taken in everything from the side sighed.

There were stone pillars that lined the main streets of the City of Silver. Atop the stone pillars were lanterns, and within the lanterns were unlit candles.

There was no sun in the sky here, no moon, no stars; only an unchanging darkness and lightning that threatened to tear apart everything.

The citizens of the City of Silver walked along the dark streets with the illumination of the lightning. The few hours when the lightning died down was considered by them as the true night as mentioned in the legends. That was the time where they had to use candles to light up the city, drive away the darkness, and make it serve as a warning for the monsters.

Derrick made his way along the street. He didn't have anywhere he wanted to go, but as he walked, he realized that he had reached the door of his house.

He took out his keys and unlocked the door. He saw the familiar sights, but he didn't hear his mother's concerned voice or his father reprimanding him for running about. The house was empty and cold.

Derrick clenched his teeth again. He walked quickly to his room and searched for the crystal ball. His father had told him that this was a crystal ball used by a long-destroyed city to worship their deity.

He knelt and faced the crystal ball, praying without any hope in mind. He pleaded bitterly, "O Magnificent Deity, please cast your eyes on this land that you have forsaken.

"O Magnificent Deity, please allow us, the People of the Dark, be freed from the curse of our destiny.

"I am willing to dedicate my life to you, using my blood to please you."

...

Over and over again, just as he was in complete despair and about to stand, he saw a dark red glow burst forth from the pure crystal ball.

The glow was like flowing water, instantly swallowing Derrick.

When he regained his senses, he realized that he was standing in a magnificent palace supported by giant stone pillars. In front of him was a long ancient table, and on the other side of the table was a human figure obscured by a thick fog.

Other than that, there was nothing around him. It was empty and ethereal. Under him was a boundless fog and incorporeal dark red specks of light.

Derrick felt a flame of hope ignite in his heart. He stared at the human figure at the very top, confused and puzzled.

"You, are you God?"

After asking this, he suddenly remembered a statement he read from a book in the City of Silver and quickly lowered his head.

That statement was: "Do not look directly at God!"

Klein leaned back as he crossed his hands. He adopted a relaxed posture and answered using the language of the giants, Jotun, "I am not God, I am merely The Fool who is interested in the long history of this world."

Klein had already activated his Spirit Vision by clicking his left molars. He noticed that the youth in front of him had different colors covering the surface of his Astral Projection and the depths of his Ether Body.

This meant that he was not a Beyonder.

The Fool... Derrick ruminated over the term and, after a long silence, said with difficulty,

"I don't care if you're God or The Fool, my prayers will not change. I hope that the people of the City of Silver will be freed from the curse of their destinies. I hope that the sun and sky described in the books will appear in our skies. If possible—if possible, I wish that my parents can be revived."

Hey, I am not a wishing well... Klein put down his hands and laughed.

"Why should I help you?"

Derrick froze. He thought for some time before saying,

"I will offer my soul to you. I will use my blood to please you."

"I have no interest in the soul and blood of a mortal." Klein smiled and shook his head. He saw the color of the youth's feelings turn into the color of despair bit by bit.

Without waiting for the youth to speak, Klein nonchalantly said, "But I can give you a chance."

"I am a Fool that likes a fair and equal exchange. You can use what you can attain to exchange with me, or people like you, to exchange for things you want. But remember, they must be

equal in value..."

"This can make you powerful. Perhaps one day, you can rely on your own strength to free the City of Silver from its curse and make the sun appear in your sky once again."

Based on the youth's description, Klein was confident that the City of Silver was the so-called Forsaken Land of God.

Of course, he couldn't be certain of this for the time being. After all, the religious literature claimed that the world existed in a "sunless" state during the First Epoch, the Chaos Epoch. No one knew if there were any other strange lands that the countries of the Northern Continent were unaware of, other than the Forsaken Land of God.

Derrick listened quietly. He lowered his head in silence and replied after a while, "I want to become the Sun. I wish to obtain the formula of the corresponding starting Sequence potion from you."

Sequence, potion, the Sun... The Sequence pathway that the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun possesses... From the looks of it, we exist in the same world...

The term "Sequence" was born from the revelation of the first Blasphemy Slate, which happened at the end of the Second Epoch, the Dark Epoch... In other words, if the City of Silver is really the Forsaken Land of God, this means that it was split apart from the Southern and Northern Continents at the end of the Second Epoch.

Could this be related to the cataclysm of the Third Epoch? According to the legends, the Evernight Goddess, Earth Mother, and the God of Combat descended upon this world and protected humans from the cataclysm along with the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom... Klein obtained a fair bit of information from the youth.

But he had trouble interpreting what the youth was saying, and even more trouble organizing his words, as he wasn't fluent in Jotun.

Luckily, ancient Feysac was derived directly from Jotun. Klein could be described as an expert in that area, and thus, he could master Jotun relatively quickly, preventing him from making a fool of himself.

Klein maintained his posture. He replied with a calm tone, “We can discuss this transaction in the future. Do not go out for the next two days. Try your best to not be in the same room as anyone else.”

He didn’t know the unit of time used in the City of Silver, much less the time difference it had with the Loen Kingdom. All he could do was generalize it as tomorrow and wait until the Tarot Gathering was over before he told him that was the time for future meetings...

Klein knew that there was a term for “day” in the Jotun, and thus deduced that the youth would understand even if the City of Silver didn’t use it as a measure of time.

“Alright, I’ll follow your instructions,” Derrick replied with his head lowered. He didn’t have any objections.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief. He tapped his fingers on the side of the table and said, “Before I send you back, let me first complete our equal exchange. I gave you a chance to be strong, and you have to give me something equal in return.”

“I have said that I am The Fool who is interested in the long history of this world. What I ask in return is the history of the City of Silver, everything that you know.”

Derrick thought for a moment before replying softly, “I will describe it faithfully.”

“The City of Silver has existed ever since the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord that created everything forsook this land. No, it existed before that, but it was called the Kingdom of Silver.”

The omnipotent and omniscient God... The Lord that created everything... Klein leaned back and maintained a profound posture while he ruminated over the words that the youth from the City of Silver had said.

He was no stranger to a "Lord that created everything." The Creator mentioned in The Book of Storms, The Revelation of Evernight, and other urban myths referred to the Creator with similar titles. It was also the way various secret organizations like the Aurora Order described the True Creator.

But this was the first time Klein was hearing of an "omnipotent and omniscient God" in this world. Be it the Evernight Goddess, Lord of Storms, and the God of Steam and Machinery, none of them claimed to be omniscient or omnipotent.

If the City of Silver was really in the Forsaken Land of God, then the Forsaken Land of God would truly belong to this world. The "omnipotent and omniscient God" might be the title of the Creator that was used by the living in ancient times... Klein looked towards the young man opposite him in thought. He looked at the emotional colors of pain and sorrow.

When Derrick felt The Fool's gaze, he lowered his head involuntarily.

He recalled the legends that his parents had told him. He said slowly and sadly, "When the sun disappeared from the sky, when the clouds were ripped and torn apart, when lightning and thunder became our rulers, and the monsters lurking in the dark suddenly emerged, ones so terrifying beyond one's imagination, they destroyed one city after another in the Kingdom of Silver. Humanity's Dark Ages had arrived.

"The remaining experts in the City of Silver then relied on their united power and two magical items before they finally warded off the attack of the Things of the Dark. They gradually eradicated the monsters within a one day journey of the city, and they established a city-state that protected the last light of human civilization."

A standard textbook description... Klein couldn't help but comment in his head.

The young man's description made him feel that the City of Silver was in a different world than the Northern Continent.

Maybe this is the unique characteristic of the Forsaken Land of God? He thought, without revealing his emotions.

Derrick calmed his breathing and continued, "During the first few decades, plants couldn't grow. The City of Silver had a severe lack of food, and we could only hunt dark creatures or mutated animals to relieve our hunger. The population dropped drastically. Fortunately, we found Black-Faced Grass. It could survive under such circumstances, and it became our only reliable and stable food source.

"It was said to be the final intervention that the magnificent God left for us. It allowed one generation after another to live on in the City of Silver. It persisted in the Dark Ages for 2582 years.

"The passage of time was recorded by a long line of Chiefs. For the rest of the people in the City of Silver, we call periods of frequent lightning 'day,' and when the lightning subsides, we call it 'night.' It's a rather confusing system, and it makes exact dates difficult to pinpoint."

Such a magical place... Klein was glad that he hadn't talked about "tomorrow," but instead vaguely mentioned the following two days.

Derrick briefly talked about the few memorable incidents in the City of Silver's history and said, "When the population returned to a certain level, the number of Beyonders increased. The sixmember council started forming elite troops to explore the dark. We have now explored all of the original territory and nearby cities. We are advancing towards the darker and more terrifying depths of the dark. At the border, we found cities with strange architectural style, but they were destroyed at some

point. We suspect that they were sanctuaries built by other remaining humans. Unfortunately, they still lost to the Things of the Dark in the end."

The Things of the Dark that he mentions should be a reference to monsters that hide in the dark, ones that are beyond imagination. Klein nodded indiscernibly.

"...The Kingdom of Silver was once ruled by the Giant King. Hence, the Beyonder chain that we are in control of is the Giant pathway, also known as the Divine Blood Warrior Sequence pathway... When we killed certain monsters and explored those destroyed cities, we obtained potion formulas of other Sequences. However, the Sequence pathways are incomplete," Derrick said, moving on to explain the current situation in the City of Silver.

Upon hearing that, Klein's mind jolted. Although he didn't change his posture much, he was obviously paying more attention.

I love knowing more about Sequence potions! The Giant King... The City of Silver and the Northern Continent share the same history? The Second Epoch's history... Hmm, killing a monster causes it to drop a formula? Is this a game? No, there's another possibility.

Those monsters were once human, Beyonders... Klein suddenly felt a heavy weight on his shoulders.

Derrick saw that the Fool didn't reply. He clenched his teeth, pondered, and said, "The names of the Giant Sequence pathway are Sequence 9 the Beyonder Warrior, Sequence 8 Gladiator, Sequence 7 Weapons Master, Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin, Sequence 5 Guardian, and Sequence 4 Demon Hunter. Only the elders in the six-member council know the names of the higher Sequences."

Sequence 4 Demon Hunter... This is the name of a High-Sequence potion formula? This is the first time I've heard something like this! Klein felt delighted at the fact that he finally learned one of the names of the higher Sequences. However, he suspected that it was a name from ancient times, which would be different from the current version in the Northern Continent, just like the Storm Priest and the Seafarer.

Oh, Beyonder Warrior, Gladiator, Weapons Master... Sounds familiar... Oh right, the Sequence pathway that the Church of the God of Combat has in control is very similar to this! Sequence 9 Warrior, Sequence 8 Pugilist, Sequence 7 Weapons Master! Due to the limits of his security clearance, Klein only knew the titles of the first three sequences that the Church of the God of Combat had in control, but the similarity between the two pathways was still obvious.

Based on the core meaning, they are basically identical. The complete Sequence that the Church of the God of Combat mastered is the so-called Giant Sequence pathway... It is said that there was a God that emerged in the Third Epoch, which was the Cataclysm Epoch, to inherit the estate of the Giant King? Or could it be that He Himself was an ancient Giant? Klein analyzed and judged while he maintained his calm appearance.

Derrick continued to explain.

"After we pulled through the initial hardships, the City of Silver has been ruled by a six-member council ever since. The elder that enjoys the highest position in the council is called the Chief. The other five are equal in rank... The current six-member council is formed by three Demon Hunters, two Guardians with the greatest potential, and a Shepherd."

The City of Silver has three High-Sequence Beyonders! Demigodlike experts! These three alone could destroy the Tarot Club a hundred times over... Klein felt a little afraid. He had yet to attempt recruiting someone under the nose of a High-Sequence Beyonder.

However, since the young man was just a mere commoner, with him not even at Sequence 9, it was unlikely that he would gain the attention of the upper echelons for a long time. Thus, Klein relaxed again.

Is Shepherd from another Sequence pathway, perhaps from one of the incomplete pathways? Sounds reminiscent of the style of the Aurora Order. The member from the Aurora Order that wrote a letter to Mr. Z, what was his name again? He kept mentioning the "Lord's lamb"... Klein maintained his leisurely posture and asked casually, "Shepherd?"

"Yes, this is a Sequence pathway that we found from a city that the Things of the Dark destroyed. It only reached Sequence 5 Shepherd, but Elder Lovia is very strong, very strange, and very scary. It is said that she once won against an evil spirit at the level of a High-Sequence Beyonder without getting injured. Therefore, when there was a vacancy in the six-member council, they made an exception for her," Derrick, feeling a little fear.

Klein thought, then smiled as he asked, "What's the Sequences before Shepherd? I find them familiar. As you know, a sequence's historical name and its current name is always different."

"In the City of Silver, the names of potions have never changed," Derrick refuted instinctively. He then lowered his head and said, "Sequence 9 Secrets Suppliant..."

Indeed! Klein was satisfied when his guesses were confirmed.

This is the name of Sequence 9 from the Aurora Order!

"Sequence 8 is Whispered, Sequence 7 Shadow Ascetic, Sequence 6 Rose Bishop, Sequence 5 Shepherd," Derrick recounted what he knew.

Whispered, Listener, they are about the same... Heh, I know more than the information provided by the Tingen Nighthawks. In a good mood, Klein beckoned for Derrick to continue.

Derrick then roughly described the current situation of the City of Silver, and finally, he couldn't help but say, "I carry the curse of destiny. Whether a citizen of the City of Silver is a commoner or a Beyonder, we all turn into evil spirits after we die. The evil spirit of a Beyonder is just stranger, more terrifying, and far more difficult to deal with. In the past, there were many occasions when this curse nearly destroyed the City of Silver. The only way to prevent an evil spirit from rising is for a person to be killed by someone of their own bloodline."

"Such a cruel matter. I hope you can grow strong and find a method for the people in the City of Silver to shake off the curse." Klein, The Fool who was merely an empty shell, could only provide some free chicken soup for the soul.

"So, I want to be the Sun... When there was a Sun shining over the land, we had never encountered any curse," Derrick muttered softly with great difficulty and pain.

Klein nodded slightly and asked, "You will have the chance to. Remember, that I can pull you in here anytime in the next two days. Try to avoid being around other people." "Alright," Derrick replied solemnly.

"Before that, I need you to confirm your code name." Klein smiled and pointed at the deck of tarot cards that appeared on the table.

Confident that Derrick had never come into contact with tarot cards, he gave a brief introduction. "Pick one of the cards as your code name. Anything besides The Fool, Justice, and The Hanged Man.

Derrick took two steps forward, flipped through the tarot cards, and said without hesitation, "Sun. I pick The Sun."

"Remember your choice, it will follow you for the rest of your life," Klein replied like a charlatan.

At the same time, he extended his hand and severed the connection in a restrained manner. Then, he watched as the crimson glow receded, and the young man opposite him turned incorporeal and dispersed bit by bit.

After the crimson light in front of him dissipated, Derrick Berg saw his room once again. He saw the pure crystal ball in his hands.

Crack!

The crystal ball shattered from the inside. Some of it turned into pieces of illusory beams of light that flew into the void around him, while the other crystalline fragments fell noisily to the ground.

Derrick looked on, dumbfounded. He could see the traces of blood on his face reflected in the bronze mirror. He noticed a crimson light spiraling on the back of his right palm, forming a circle with lines extending out from the edge.

The strange symbol bore into the back of his palm and vanished.

Derrick fell into a daze in the time it took several flashes of lightning to illuminate the sky before snapping to his senses.

He looked at the fragments of the crystal ball on the ground, then looked at the back of his right hand as his gaze turned deeper.

He walked out of his bedroom, returned to the living room, and opened the door to look up at the sky above the City of Silver.

An arc of lightning streaked across the sky, illuminating the city with a silver sheen. Right on the heels of that was rumbling thunder. The world belonged to the dark. Without any speck of light, the heavy darkness only left people in despair.

Derrick clenched his fists. There was no joy in his eyes for they were still filled with the remnant grief and pain.

But he was no longer lost.

...

Phew, looks like I've managed to trick another person into becoming a member. No, I've managed to recruit another member... Klein shook his head and mocked the present strength of his Tarot Club.

The leader, The Fool, was only a Sequence 9, one who had just fully digested the Seer potion!

And there were at least three High-Sequence Beyonders at Sequence 4 in the hopeless City of Silver that The Sun spoke of!

"After mentioning the acting method one more time, I can start telling the Captain the specifics and hand in my special application. At the very least, I'll stop being in charge of support once I become a Clown." Klein didn't stay in the world of fog. He extended his spirituality, wrapped it around himself, and initiated a descent.

Tearing through the gray fog and passing through the ravings, he returned to his room before dispelling the wall of spirituality.

Then, Klein picked up the key and headed out of the room. He first went to the two rooms booked by Dunn to take a look in order to confirm that the Captain and Frye hadn't returned yet. He then headed to the first level and handed the key back to the boss.

The boss looked at the wall clock to the side and gave a thumbs up.

"Well done!"

Hey, are you mistaken over why I booked an hourly room? Klein wanted to explain himself, but finally decided to leave the misunderstanding as it was.

Feeling wronged, he tried to console himself.

Yes, this way, he won't mention that I rented another room in front of the Captain!

After heading out and going through the motions, Klein did a quick divination and returned to the inn based on the results. He headed straight to the second floor to find Dunn and Frye discussing their investigations in one of the rooms, just as he expected.

"We can confirm that the wraith appeared within the last three months," Dunn summarized to Klein with a nod as he came through the door.

Klein immediately echoed, "My investigations also confirmed it..."

He highlighted the main points of his questioning and concluded, "Heh, there's a townsfolk named Scoundrel Gray who claimed that he had the portrait of the first Baron Lamud. He said that it was an antique oil painting more than a thousand years old."

"Don't tell me you bought it?" Dunn's eyes shimmered as he was taken aback before he asked.

Captain, do you think that I'm so stupid to be fooled that easily? Klein gave a dry laugh.

"No, I didn't. Even though I'm a history student, I have attended some lessons on archeology and have some degree of experience in this area. I can more or less determine if something is fake. Heh, the person in the portrait looked a little like my history teacher, Mr. Azik."

He casually mentioned the most important piece of information.

And indeed, Dunn didn't pay too much attention to it. He massaged his temples and said, "This is a small town near a historical site. There will always be a myriad of 'antiques' here. I just saw a vendor selling the silver wine glasses of Baron Lamud."

"Someone tried to sell me the insignia of the Lamud Family, claiming that it had been dug out of the castle," Frye added.

Klein subconsciously asked, "Did you guys buy them?"

Frye and Klein looked at each other, and didn't continue with the subject.

"The next mission is for you or Frye to take Sealed Artifact 3-0782 out of town to somewhere uninhabited. Otherwise, a good half of the people in this inn will become idiots blathering praises of the Sun. Are you going first, or Frye?" Dunn looked at Klein with his deep gray eyes.

"Me." Klein raised his hand slightly and smiled. "It's still quite early, so I can come back and have a nice sleep later. We're doing two-hour shifts, right?"

"Yes. Frye, go over with Klein and confirm where you'll exchange the Sealed Artifact." Dunn turned to look at Corpse Collector Frye. He had already found an opportunity to hand Sealed Artifact 3-0782 over to Frye when they split up to conduct their investigations. Otherwise, he would have been purified and started praising the Sun. Frye hadn't had enough time to recover, and could only hold the item for another three hours.

"Alright." Frye took out the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem from the inner pocket of his black trench coat and handed it over to Klein.

Klein took the item with a fair bit of curiosity and interest. The metal was warm to the touch, as if hot water was flowing within it.

The warm, gentle glow was like a ripple, spreading outward in waves and bringing with it a pure smell. At the same time, Klein felt that the dark golden Sacred Emblem carved with the symbol of the Sun was cleansing his spirituality, removing the impurities and leaving it pure.

Of course, all Sealed Artifacts have their dangers. Death might occur if one isn't careful enough. It's even possible to have a fate worse than death... He muttered to himself as he placed the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 into his inner pocket.

After inspecting his revolver, charms, and cane, he walked out of the room and left the inn together with Frye. They headed straight for the outskirts of Lamud Town.

The two circled an area beside a sparse and deserted forest and confirmed that there was no one within dozens of meters of them.

“Chase away anyone who approaches you,” Frye coldly

reminded, “I’ll come to take your place in two hours.” “Sounds good,” Klein replied with a smile.

After seeing Frye enter the town, he found a tall boulder he had eyed previously. He picked up some leaves from the tree beside him and wiped the surface of the boulder.

He then touched the top of the stone with his finger and inspected the stone under the light of the crimson moon.

After confirming that it was clean, Klein put on his black trench coat and sat down.

Why stand when you can sit! Klein thought to himself.

After a few minutes of silence, he looked at the dark, quiet, and rather scary forest. He couldn’t help but stand up, taking out several metal bottles from his hidden pockets and scattering their contents—herb powder and essential oils—around the boulder.

Klein recited an incantation in Hermes. With the help of the materials, he created a barrier of spirituality, sealing the area he was in.

He did this simple ritual for two reasons. First, he didn’t want to rely too much on his premonition for danger as a Seer to defend against corpses and spirits launching a sneak attack against him. The second reason was to—was to keep the bugs away...

This is a hundred times better than insect repellent! Klein sat back down, satisfied.

After sitting there for a few minutes, Klein took out Sealed Artifact 3-0782 out of curiosity. He began a detailed inspection of the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

I wonder if I could use divination to find out its origins and how it became special... He took out the pen and paper he always had on him and wrote a statement: “The origin of the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem in my hands.”

As a qualified and true Seer, Klein had made the preparations needed to divine anywhere.

After reciting the statement seven times, he closed his eyes and entered a state of Cogitation, using that as a launchpad to propel him into his dreams.

All he saw were fragmented pieces of light in his dreams. Other than that, he didn’t learn anything else.

Yes, the Church must have gotten other Seers to attempt the same thing in the past. The fact that there is no mention of its origins must mean that there was no result from the divination, just like what happened just now... Klein sighed. He then thought, I wonder what would happen if I eliminate the interferences?

This thought immediately filled Klein’s head, pushing his curiosity to a peak.

After more than ten minutes of hesitation, he stood up. He decided that it was fine since there was no one around, considering how he was in a secluded area of the forest. He took four steps counterclockwise inside his wall of spirituality before entering the world above the fog once again.

Klein sat at the seat of honor of the ancient table in the magnificent palace. He conjured a few sheets of yellowish-brown goatskin and a black fountain pen, as well as the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

“It feels rather real...” He rubbed Sealed Artifact 3-0782 in his hands, finding the tactile feedback identical to the one he had felt in the outside world.

It instantiates itself based on what I felt? Klein mumbled to himself before writing down the statement he had come up with previously:

“The origin of the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem in my hands.”

After reciting the statement seven times, he held the piece of goatskin and Sealed Artifact 3-0782 in his hands. He leaned back and entered his dream.

In the blurry dreamworld, Klein saw a drop of glowing gold liquid. It was warm and bright.

It was suspended above an altar, before a man dressed in a white classic robe.

The man only had his back facing Klein. He had lost all signs of life as he fell slowly towards the sacrificial altar.

At that moment, the Sun Sacred Emblem he was holding had come into contact with the golden liquid, the latter quickly seeping into the emblem.

The dream quickly dissipated after Klein saw this, waking him up.

So it was because of the golden liquid that this Sacred Emblem has been so effective and uncontrollable to this day. Hmm, decades have passed since the discovery of this emblem, but its cleansing powers haven’t declined. I wonder what that golden liquid was? Some advanced Beyonder ingredient? Klein toyed with the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 in his hand and slipped into deep thought.

After deliberating over it for a few minutes, he tried to emulate the feeling he had in the dream. He wanted to separate the golden liquid from the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem he had conjured.

He accomplished it almost immediately as the thought came to him. Klein looked in shock at the emblem which was no longer warm or pure. He watched as the drops of golden liquid silently suspended themselves in the air. He had even more praises for this mysterious space above the fog.

This is practically a miracle, even if the separation and instantiation here isn’t real!

“The origins of this drop of golden liquid.” He penned down a new statement with great excitement.

"The origins of this drop of golden liquid."

After reciting the divination statement seven times, Klein held onto the goatskin and the illusory golden liquid before leaning back in his seat.

He didn't know if he could divine with the item that was instantiated based purely on a feeling. All he could do was make bold assumptions and carefully seek confirmation.

In seconds, Klein's eyes darkened, turning from brown to black as he entered a state of Cogitation.

His eyelids drooped down and he "saw" the illusory yet blurry dream.

In the blurry world that looked in shambles, a golden, glaring sun suddenly appeared!

A low grunt resounded across the void. The pure and clean light suddenly lit everything up as the gold and burning flames swept outwards.

Boom!

Klein was instantly expelled from his dreamworld and flipped onto his side as he shivered. His body seemed to become a huge bonfire which burned with a raging flame.

At that moment, his thoughts were all over the place. No proper idea could form from the chaos in his mind.

Rumble!

The mysterious space above the gray fog shook violently, and the lofty palace collapsed inch by inch. The ancient, mottled bronze table broke into a few pieces.

The terrifying changes only continued for three seconds before the world above the gray fog returned to tranquility as though nothing had happened.

The gold flame on Klein gradually extinguished. He rolled around on his charred skin as he groaned in pain, until he eventually regained his ability to think.

He supported himself on the armrest of the high chair and stood up with great difficulty. He was terrified and confused about what had just happened.

He had never imagined that a mere divination would result in such consequences!

He panted and lifted his head to survey his surroundings. He realized that the lofty palace and ancient bronze table, which looked like they had stood unchanged since ancient times, had been damaged. In the world above the gray fog, which had never experienced any abnormality, it was simply an unprecedented level of damage.

What happened? Did my divination point towards some unfathomable existence? Klein calmed down slightly and let his burned flesh shed while he speculated. *If I wasn't protected by this mysterious space above the gray fog, there might not even be ashes of me left behind... Could that drop of gold liquid be the blood of a god? Did I see the Eternal Blazing Sun, or some powerful angel of His? No, that was the sun, so I think it was the former... Damn, did I just look directly at a god?*

Klein felt more fear as he thought about it. He felt that he had nearly died.

Those who know nothing fear nothing, but those who don't court death won't die... In the future, I can't just divine anything and everything. Who knows what I'll see!

If that were to happen once more, I don't know if this mysterious space could even shelter me from fatal damage... When that happens, I'd actually die...

Yes, it definitely won't do if I continue making experiments with the golden liquid. The existence from before which was likely Eternal Blazing Sun. He must have sensed the sudden, hidden and unexpected

influence from the divination above the gray fog and failed to respond in time... If He were prepared, this mysterious space might not have been able to withstand the repercussions...

Having come to this realization, Klein's body had already returned to normal. It was no longer charred, but compared to before, he was dimmer and more incorporeal than before.

He lifted his hand to massage his temples and commanded with his mind to restore the palace and the long table.

Then, the palace that looked like the home of a giant and the long table cast out of bronze returned to normal. Everything looked like it had before.

Klein sat down and leaned against the back of the chair. He engaged in self-mockery.

Well, this isn't entirely bad. At least I know the limit of the mysterious space and I have a certain goal... Only powers approaching the angels of the gods can completely influence the power of the area above the gray fog?

Sigh, I have to add another new rule to my Seer principles. 'Do not randomly divine things that involve a high-level entity.' Yes, I shouldn't hastily activate my Spirit Vision either. If I were to look directly at things that shouldn't be looked at directly, it might be game over. In the outside world, I don't have the mysterious space to fend off most of the negative effects...

After a while, Klein's expression turned odd because some knowledge was reverberating in his head.

Yes, knowledge!

In the short time he had spent with what appeared to be Eternal Blazing Sun, Klein was constantly in his divination state. Hence, he could instinctively divine certain matters and knowledge from the being that he was looking at.

He quickly used a dream divination to recall and organize what he had gathered that wasn't his primary objective. He picked up the black fountain pen and wrote one line after another.

"1. Do not look directly at God.

"2. White Angel.

"3. The technique of making a Flaring Sun Charm... It's a relatively high level charm in the domain of the Sun. Its potency can last a year before it deteriorates... There's no need for a ritual to pray to the Eternal Blazing Sun, but the procedure requires the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 to take the ritual's place. It will siphon power from the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem...

"4. Extremely hostile towards Lord of Storms and God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

"5. Bard potion formula:

Main ingredients: a Crystal Sunflower or an adult Flint Bird's tail feather or a Fire Bird's tail feather... A piece of Siren Rock or a Singing Sunflower...

Supplementary ingredients: a blade of Midsummer Grass, 5 drops of July Wine Juice, a blade of Elf Dark Leaf...

"6. Light Suppliant potion formula:

Main ingredients: a piece of Brilliance Rock or powder of Dazzling Soul or... Blood of a Mirror Hedgehog or the Heart of a Magma Titan...

Supplementary ingredients: a Golden-edged Sunflower, three drops of Aconite Juice...

"7. Priest of Light potion formula:

Information of main ingredients missing.

Supplementary ingredients: 5 grams of Rosemary, 7 drops of fingered citron juices, Rock Water...

“8. Sequence 4, Unshadowed potion formula. Main ingredients could be the golden blood of god extracted from the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem. It could also be replaced with three adult Sun Divine Bird’s tail feathers and a piece of Holy Brilliance Rock.

Information of supplementary ingredients missing...”

After writing down the eight lines, Klein couldn’t help but rap the edge of the long bronze table.

He had gained way more than he imagined!

He was already satisfied with surviving his reckless divination earlier, but now he had received an unexpected “survival reward.”

From the confidential information he received from the Nighthawks, he knew that the Sequence pathway that the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun held was called Sun, and its Sequence 9 was Bard. It would allow the Beyonder to imbue courage and strength for themselves and their allies through their singing, a “job” that brought about devotion and submission. Their slogan was “Let us praise the Sun!”

The corresponding Sequence 8 was Light Suppliant. They could cast spells and hold rituals from the Sun’s domain which were very effective against corpses and spirits. Sequence 7 was called Solar High Priest, which greatly enhanced the spells and rituals within its domain.

In other words, I have obtained the complete potion formulas of Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 in the Sun Sequence pathway. Yes, unlike before, the potion formula even lists replacement items and ingredient names from different eras... As expected of formulas obtained directly from Eternal Blazing Sun through divination! Klein thought in satisfaction.

He had originally planned on seeing if The Hanged Man could solve the request of the young man from the City of Silver. After all, the Church of Storms and the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun were the most ancient orthodox sects. They had fought against each other for thousands of years, so it would only make sense for the two churches to have learned the initial sequence of each other’s pathways.

The Hanged Man might not have cared about the Sun pathway previously, but since he is very likely a Sequence 7 Seafarer, it would probably be easy for him if he really needed to gather the information. However, I don’t need him now. I solved it myself, through an unbelievable yet extremely dangerous method... Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, my Sun friend, your Fool nearly turned himself into a charred corpse... Klein lampooned silently while still feeling a lingering sense of fear.

He lowered his head and looked at the records on the goatskin before him. He thought of another formula.

Would the Priest of Light be an ancient name of Solar High Priest? The confidential information of the Nighthawks never mentioned it, and my divination didn’t pinpoint the Sequence number... Is it Sequence 6, or Sequence 5?

Sequence 4, Unshadowed... This is the first High-Sequence formula that I’ve obtained! It’s such a pity that it lacks the supplementary ingredients. I wonder how I can fill in the blanks? I can’t believe that drop of golden liquid is really the blood of a god. Sealed Artifact 3-0782 is probably far stronger than anyone imagines.

From what I can see, it’s sufficient to become a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact.

Yes, it’s likely that the Nighthawks from before only determined whether the item has any traits of the living, how much danger it would cause to nearby humans, how difficult it is to control the item’s effects, and if it can be used against corpses and spirits. They had no way of discovering its unique origin.

The Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem can probably even fight against evil spirits... How could the examiner find an evil spirit to experiment on?

As an official Nighthawk, I can't become the owner of Sealed Artifact 3-0782, but, yes, I can find an opportunity to make a Flaring Sun Charm and siphon its power? Sigh. I certainly can't do it now. I haven't prepared the necessary ingredients. Why would I, a Nighthawk of the Evernight Goddess, carry the ingredients of the Sun around with me?

Klein massaged his forehead regrettably. He saw that there was no other movement in the world above the gray fog and finally relaxed. He confirmed that the Eternal Blazing Sun hadn't managed to track him down.

Do not look directly at God, do not look directly at a high-level entity. I must remember this!

Why would the Eternal Blazing Sun be extremely hostile towards the Lord of Storms and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom?

What the hell is a White Angel?

...

As these mixed thoughts filled his brain, Klein felt the emptiness and an aching pain in his head. Plus, he felt that too much time had passed. He had to return to the outer world, just in case someone discovered anything amiss.

Back then, he thought it would take a minute or so to divine two or three times in the mysterious space. Plus, there was a spirituality wall isolating him from everything else. Once it was touched, his body in the world above the gray fog would sense it. Hence, he felt utterly safe, but he hadn't considered the possibility of having some sort of accident. In the end, he nearly lost his life and that wasted quite a bit of time.

Due to the fact that he was afraid that he would be greeted by a Light of Purification beam or discover that the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem was damaged, he enveloped his body with spirituality before he stimulated a descent with his heart in his mouth.

The crimson moonlight reflected in his eyes, and there was a darkness hidden within. Klein saw the sparse forest and the weeds before him, as well as the intact Sealed Artifact 3-0782 in his hands.

After a few seconds of breathless anxiety, he finally believed that he was safe.

Phew... Klein let out a breath of relief. He felt exhausted after his insane probing at the border of death.

The exhausted Klein dispelled the sealed wall of spirituality, allowing the cool wind to blow onto his face. The scent of grass and trees that the wind carried revitalized him.

He rubbed the warm and classic Sealed Artifact 3-0782 with his hands and sighed to himself.

"Who would have thought that there would be a drop of god's blood in this emblem? I have to assume that the experts from the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun must have tried searching for this item in the past, but couldn't find it..."

Klein stretched his neck. He didn't dare try anything else, keeping the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem in the inner pocket of his trench coat.

His hand followed a chain and took out a silver vine-leaf pocket watch. He opened it to see that there was still about an hour before Corpse Collector Frye's shift.

I need two matches to prop up my eyelids... This is a side effect of that near-death experience! Klein didn't have any other ideas. All he could do was take out a small metal bottle from a tiny hidden pocket. He uncapped the bottle and brought it near his nose.

A pungent smell, a mix of mint and disinfectant, quickly entered his nose, giving Klein goosebumps. His senses were jolted, making him forget his fatigue temporarily.

He had learned the formula from Corpse Collector Frye. It was called Quelaag's Oil, and it could help a person ignore the stench of rotting corpses, as well as refresh and clear the mind.

The next hour felt like torture. Klein paced around from time to time, and was bitten by the mosquitoes in the forest several times.

Finally, he saw the black-haired, blue-eyed Frye walking out of the town wearing a trench coat and holding a cane.

Even though Frye still looked like a living corpse, Klein felt as though he was looking at his savior. He covered his mouth and let out a yawn, making his eyes teary. He made his way over and took out Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from his pocket.

"What happened?" Frye asked as he looked at his partner's pale face.

Klein sighed and said, "I just did my shift at Chanis Gate the previous night and didn't sleep too well in the morning, so I'm very tired."

He didn't elaborate further and changed the subject. "Shall I come for my next shift four hours from now?"

"Seven hours. The Captain doesn't need sleep at night." Frye took the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

I'm glad someone enjoys staying up late... Klein ridiculed the Captain under his breath. He bade goodbye to Frye and walked towards the town.

On the way back to the inn, he took out his pocket watch again and checked the time.

Hmm, ten minutes earlier than we arranged... What a nice person... Klein laughed and walked faster. He returned to the inn and opened the half-closed door. The boss watched him as he made his way to the second floor before he entered his room.

He removed his coat and shoes after locking the door. He didn't wash up, but instead fell directly onto the bed.

His breathing became heavy in just a few seconds, then long and peaceful.

In his dreams, Klein returned to Earth where he was playing a game he hadn't beaten. A cup of soda and a plate of spicy chicken wings were on his left. To his right was a bowl of rice and bitter bamboo shoots meat soup.

He didn't like bitter bamboo shoots, but he liked it in soup with meat slices. The refreshing taste and the little bit of fat from the meat were tantalizing, a perfect complement to the rice.

He could eat an extra bowl of rice if it was paired with some good sauce dip!

Just as Klein was about to enjoy his supper and continue playing his game, his dream changed again, presenting him with the internal layout of 2 Daffodil Street.

Klein suddenly became alert, aware that he was dreaming.

He saw himself seated at the side of the dining table, a copy of the Tingen Daily Tribune in his hand. In front of him was a bowl of tomato oxtail stew, pan-fried lamb chops, mashed potatoes, and wheat bread.

He subconsciously turned to look at the door, suddenly noticing a figure standing outside the window of the living room, silently staring inside the house!

Klein was shocked. He immediately recognized the gray-eyed Dunn. Half his face was clinging close to the window as he silently watched the people inside.

...Captain, can you not scare someone in their dreams? Is this your way of acting as a Nightmare? Klein thought, finding humor in his exasperation. He scooped up a mouthful of stew and put it into his mouth.

Ah, this is my cooking! He sighed to himself. He understood why he became suddenly became alert in his dream, why the scene of him on Earth vanished.

He would naturally become aware when someone barged into his dreams!

At this moment, Dunn left his spot by the oriel window and directly entered the house. In his black trench coat, he came silently before Klein.

He took off his hat and nodded before sitting down. He didn't stand on ceremony, picking up cutlery and quickly polishing off the stew, lamb chops, wheat bread on the table.

Klein looked on dumbfounded, unsure what the Captain was doing.

Phew. Dunn exhaled in satisfaction and gave Klein a thumbs up. He then took out his pipe and a matchstick before taking an intoxicated puff.

He exhaled a cloud of smoke and stood up. He then put on his hat and bowed before leaving the house and the dream.

"..." Klein looked at the Captain's back, unable to collect himself for a long time.

He looked down at the empty plates and instinctively wanted to conjure up the food he had just now.

But this time, the oxtail stew, lamb chops, mashed potatoes didn't appear in his dream.

It was completely eaten? A Nightmare can do that? Klein twitched his lips and thought in frustration. *So the Captain's goal was to prevent me from eating supper in my dream? That sure is a nightmare... This method of acting as a Nightmare sure is creative...*

He let out a laugh and exited his dream, once again falling asleep.

At about half past five the morning the next day, Klein, who had no choice but to wake up early, drink his coffee and eat his toast and bacon. He hurried out of town to take over from Dunn.

At seven in the morning, they prepared to set off back to Tingen.

It wasn't even ten when they arrived at 36 Zouteland Street. Fyre sat behind the typewriter after Dunn, the most energized of the lot, returned Sealed Artifact 3-0782 to the back of Chanis Gate. He took advantage of the fact that the clerks hadn't arrived yet so that he could write a report on the mission and the claims of the related expenditures.

Klein looked on from the side, satisfied that the items he had expended were within the list—including the materials he used to drive the bugs and mosquitoes away.

He didn't return home immediately, for he had arranged to meet the asylum's Doctor Daxter at one in the afternoon at the agreed upon venue through a coded letter.

Then there's still the Tarot Gathering at three... Why does the boss of a secret society have such a tiring life? Klein thought to himself. He took a two-hour nap in the Nighthawks break room to catch up on sleep.

He didn't forget the information he had obtained the previous day. He wasn't worried that he would forget, for the information could be recalled using divination. He was afraid that he would disregard the existence of this information and even lose the ability to divine the information. Thus, he recalled the pieces of information once again before he slept to reinforce them.

This was also the reason Klein insisted on doing a review every week and reorganize all the information he knew.

After lunch, he took a look at his pocket watch and left the

Blackthorn Security Company for the Shooting Club at 3 Zouteland Street.

Klein entered the reception area after pushing open the door, but he didn't head directly to the shooting range belonging to the Nighthawks. Instead, he found a seat in the hall as he waited patiently with his black cane in hand.

He had arranged to meet Daxter at the Zouteland Street Shooting Club!

He had arranged this through handwritten letters. Whenever Klein needed to meet him, he would write to Doctor Daxter Guderian in place of a patient's family member and ask about a unique condition called "dissociative identity disorder." In his letter, Klein would use various methods to mention the term Spectator, as well as a hidden mark of ink to authenticate his identity. The letter would also casually mention a time to meet.

As for the place to meet, they had already decided this the first time they met. If Klein felt that there was a need to change the location, he would mention it when they met in person.

When Daxter Guderian needed to meet for nonurgent matters, he could send a letter to the Hound Pub or the Shooting Club. The recipient would be marked as Mr. Hornacis which Klein would take at scheduled times.

In urgent situations, he could hand the letter directly to the boss of the Hound Pub, Wright, and mention his "search for mercenaries." This way, Wright, who was an associate of the Nighthawks, would immediately hand the letter over to the Blackthorn Security Company.

After waiting for a while, Klein saw the refined Daxter enter the Shooting Club, a few minutes past one.

He was wearing a black hat and a fitted tuxedo. He had a cane inlaid with silver in his hands, as well as a pair of gold-framed spectacles on his face.

Daxter walked around the club without attracting attention and saw Klein, who nodded slightly. He then retracted his gaze and walked to the counter, expertly applying for a shooting range and renting a gun.

This was not his first visit.

“Small shooting range 7, 3 soli an hour. The fee for renting a revolver is one soli seven pence per hour and it contains six rounds,” the receptionist quickly settled the request.

After Daxter confirmed that he was renting the items for an hour and paid the fee of 10 soli, he took the revolver and extra bullets and was led into the respective shooting range by the facilitator.

Klein waited another five minutes before slowly standing up. He grabbed his cane before walking to the small shooting range 7 and knocked on the door.

The door opened a tiny crack with a creak. Daxter first looked around cautiously, then opened the door fully.

Klein immediately entered and locked the door.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Daxter,” he said as he took out a 10 soli bill. He handed the bill over to Daxter. “We wouldn’t let our associates bear any extra fees.”

Because I can claim compensation... He added in his heart.

Daxter didn’t decline. He took the cash and asked heavily, “Mr. Moretti, why did you ask to meet me?”

Klein obviously couldn't just bring up the Telepathist formula right at the start. However, he didn't hide his intention either. After all, the man opposite him was a Spectator. He wouldn't be conned so easily.

"Has Hood Eugen behaved unusually recently?" he first asked Daxter Guderian about the patient in the asylum who was a member of the Psychology Alchemists.

Daxter examined Klein's eyes, expression, and gestures. He thought and said, "No, he's acting normal. Frankly speaking, I think if he really wanted to leave the asylum, he could immediately behave in a very healthy and very normal manner. But he hasn't done so, and he continues to stay in the asylum. He appears to be treating every patient. Yes, patients who exhibit chaotic, violent, or abnormal thoughts appear to be getting better. Maybe Hood Eugen is trying to train his Beyonder powers with this method."

Psychiatrist, Sequence 7 that corresponds to Spectator? Perhaps even higher... Since Hood Eugen isn't a doctor in the asylum but entered as a patient, it means that he hasn't truly grasped the acting method. It should be as Daxter has guessed; he's probably training his Beyonder skills and doing so resembles that of the "acting method." To a certain extent, it could slow down the potion's negative influence. Hence, Hood Eugen decided to just take the asylum as his home... Klein openly showed that he was in deep thought regarding Hood Eugen's matter.

Because that would make Daxter Guderian feel that he knew and understood a lot, making him appear unfathomable.

With this in mind, Klein guessed something else. *The Psychology Alchemists hadn't grasped the "acting method." After all, even a mainstay member at the Sequence 7 was unaware of this. In this era with few Beyonders, a Sequence 7 was considered mid level in any secret organization. They were important enough to know crucial matters, especially those that could help members resist the loss of control.*

Plus, the Psychology Alchemists was a secret organization that had only been established in the last three hundred years or even earlier. It was understandable that they hadn't grasped or deduced the "acting method." The only organization that brought up the method explicitly was the Secret Order. They were an ancient organization that had more than fifteen hundred years of history and could be traced back to the previous epoch!

Hey, the Church of the Goddess is even older than the Secret Order. Just the Letter of Saints from The Revelation of Evernight clearly indicates that it's nearly three thousand years old. That's not to mention the mythical legends before that... How could such an ancient church not discover the "acting method?"

During the long history of a huge organization, there must have been members who experimented with various possibilities, just like Spirit Medium Daly. They might not have understood the principle of the acting method in detail, but they acted out the name of the potion correctly anyway. They would have discovered the gist of it through the good feedback they received. As that accumulates through the generations of Nighthawks, unless the higher-ups were a bunch of curly-haired baboons, it would be impossible not to deduce the "acting method!"

Klein's thoughts made the connection and was suddenly shocked.

To the Nighthawks who didn't know of the "acting method," someone like Spirit Medium Daly was a genius, an example that an ordinary member couldn't emulate. Hence, no one suspected that the experience of Daly and others could be adapted for their own use.

But to those who have grasped the "acting method," this would be extremely odd!

Klein believed that in the long history of the Church of Evernight, Spirit Medium Daly was definitely not the first member to have used the "acting method" to digest the Low Sequence potions quickly. She might not even be in the top ten or top fifty!

It doesn't make sense. Unless Daly didn't understand the "acting method" on her own, but had other people's guidance... Then, it could be concluded that every member of the Holy Cathedral follows the beliefs of the past, believing in their predecessor's experience, and not daring to rebel against their teaching. After all, rebelling would imply the loss of control most of the time... Yes, other than this explanation, there is another possibility. The higher-ups of the church have hidden the "acting method" for some reason...

I need to flip through some records and search for examples of Beyonders in the Church of Evernight digesting their potions quickly, as well as their final outcome... Klein thought with a mask of solemnity.

Daxter looked at him, waited for a few minutes, and asked curiously, "Officer, is there some sort of problem with Hood Eugen's actions?"

"Not right now. It just made me think of other matters," Klein replied, smiling. He cast his suspicions aside.

He asked instead, "Has there been any actions taken by the Psychology Alchemists recently?"

"No, besides a small gathering in Awwa to exchange items and experience," Daxter answered honestly.

Klein nodded slightly and said, "How about your own situation?"

Daxter controlled his expression as he replied, "Not too good myself. I still hear some ravings and have some illusions. If I wasn't a doctor specializing in mental health, I might even think that I have some sort of disorder."

As he spoke, his face grew solemn. "I followed Hood Eugen's and your instructions to ignore those illusions and ravings. That made me feel much better, but they still affect my sleep, and I have become more grumpy and short-tempered. I'm not like myself, as though another new me is growing from within, or maybe it could be described as a new character. I'm very worried and terrified that I might suddenly lose control one day."

Just as I have predicted, I didn't even need to divine to see that coming... Having prepared for this, Klein smiled and said, "You don't have to worry, you're a subsidiary member of the Nighthawks now. There are benefits for you. As an ancient organization, we master many methods to keep one from losing control. It isn't one hundred percent effective, but it will definitely help you."

"Besides, I'm willing to share with you my personal experience. You must know the man standing before you only used a month to shake off the shackles of illusions and ravings, and they haven't resurfaced. You should know from Hood Eugen and your other cadres that doing so is very difficult."

For Sequence 8 Telepathist, Klein bragged a little.

"Officer, there's a bit of a lie in what you said, but it's mostly the truth," Daxter suddenly said calmly. "What do you want from me?"

It's tough to lie to a Spectator... Klein replied with a smile, "It's not something that only I want to get."

Miss Justice wants it too.

Of course, he knew that Daxter would definitely assume that the Nighthawks team wanted something.

"If your method is really effective, and the items or information you want is within my reach..." Daxter weighed his words as he spoke.

"I will give you the perks in advance," Klein said

straightforwardly. “We want the Telepathist formula.”

He wouldn’t hide the potion formula but inform the Captain as well. He would tell the Captain that Daxter used it in exchange for his personal experience on bringing the potion under control.

During the procedure, Klein would definitely verify the formula and “accidentally” memorize it in his head.

Besides, he would use the fact that he used his personal experience in exchange for the formula to earn merit with the Nighthawks.

By then, with his previous merits, he might not even need to put in extra effort to apply for the Clown formula and main ingredients.

A formula for two deals, quite a good bargain... Klein thought happily.

Daxter looked into his eyes and kept quiet for a while before he said, “You’re very frank... I’ll try my best to get the formula, but I’m not sure how long it’ll take me. If it gets too dangerous, I hope that I can replace it with something else.”

“No problem.” Klein didn’t intend to force the request on the man. He then described the “acting method” vaguely. “The key to resisting the loss of control lies within the name of the potion. We have to understand it and learn its true meaning. You can’t completely understand it by thinking about it. It must be understood through experience. For instance, as a Spectator, you have to understand that you’re only a spectator, not an actor. How a Spectator should act is something that you need to discover through attempts and experimentation to deduce the principles required of you. From there, adhere to it strictly.”

Daxter listened attentively. Then, he replied, “That’s a brand new way to look at things. Heh, I’m willing to use the word ‘theory’ to describe what you just said. This is just like a theory of a play and opera... I’ll try, and I hope it’ll help.

“If—if it really works, I’ll do my best to get you the Telepathist formula!”

“May the Goddess protect you.” Klein drew a crimson moon on his chest.

Klein didn’t request the potion formula of Psychiatrist as well, because he knew that it was a task that Daxter couldn’t complete with his current position. He might end up exposing him if he wasn’t careful.

Thus, he planned to take it one step at a time by helping Daxter achieve a higher position in the Psychology Alchemists slowly.

Then, the long-term benefits would be abundant.

Klein looked outside through the peephole in the door, then he left quickly and turned to the small shooting range that was designated for the Nighthawks.

He entered and locked the door. His face grew grave once again. When he was guessing the reason why the Church of the Goddess hadn’t developed the “acting method,” he realized another thing that he had overlooked!

He had overlooked it because he had obtained two crucial factors in reverse order. It made him fail to make a further consideration.

The first matter was that the Antigonus family was destroyed by the Church of Evernight.

The second matter was that the Antigonus family had the Seer Sequence in its grasp, or at least, most of it.

As there was a very long period of time between when Klein learned the two facts, he almost didn’t piece them together. Hence, he overlooked something that should have been pretty obvious.

Since the Antigonus family had grasped a majority of the Sequences of the Seer pathway, how is it possible that the Church of Evernight only received Sequence 9 Seer?

They should have obtained more than that as the spoils of war!

If a member from the Aurora Order got ahold of the Clown formula from the Antigonus family's magical notebook, then what about the Church that destroyed the entire Antigonus family?

Even if the Antigonus family was well prepared and hid their most valuable things at the highest peak of Hornacis Mountain, the Church of Evernight shouldn't have gained so little. They were the ones who killed the family members of Antigonus family.

Furthermore, the dead can be made to speak!

Klein paced around the small shooting range as he pondered over the intent of the Church of Evernight regarding the Seer pathway.

Do they not want Nighthawks to choose this pathway, or do they not want Beyonders to become powerful through this pathway? As such, they only revealed the Sequence 9 Seer which is clearly a support type? Captain also mentioned that the Holy Cathedral might have the subsequent recipes...

No, they didn't even provide the names of the potions for Sequence Numbers 8 and 7 in the confidential information that I read. They merely described the battle characteristics of each Sequence... In other words, they don't want those under them to realize that the Church might hold the actual formulas.

Is there a possibility that Nighthawks who chose this pathway could become "vengeful spirits" for the Antigonus family, and thus, the higher-ups of the Church made a decision like this? Or could there be some other reason?

Klein suddenly felt incredibly suspicious, a sense of intense wariness and vigilance, towards the higher-ups of the Church. He began reconsidering whether he should openly hand over the special application to become a Clown.

If there are some terrifying secrets behind this, wouldn't I be jumping into the fire myself? Frankly, I'm not a person that can be placed under strict investigation...

But the Tingen branch has handed the Clown potion formula over to the Church. Any Seer who learned of this would hope to advance. Isn't that normal? Sequence 8 is still considered a low Sequence, so it shouldn't invite too much attention...

The only problem is that I would only take a month to completely digest the potion and submit a special application. If the higherups are familiar with the "acting method," they would be able to realize what I did immediately... Of course, I do have an excuse; I know Spirit Medium Daly after all. Old Neil, who is strict in abiding by the Mystery Pryer's maxim, is also my friend. The claim that I gained inspiration from them and refined the "acting method" isn't too hard to believe.

Yes, even Daly received attention from the higher-ups only after showing signs of digesting a Sequence 7 potion in three years, and is now being nurtured to become a future Archbishop. Being at the stage of Clown shouldn't garner me too much attention—unless I fully digest the Clown potion in a few months, giving them confirmation to believe that I have truly mastered the "acting method"...

In other words, applying for the Clown potion isn't a risky move. I can continue with that plan, but I should pay attention to this in the future. Sigh, I'll have to take things one step at a time. I'll do a divination back at home.

Klein collected himself and took out his revolver from his holster before carrying on with his daily shooting practice and maintenance.

The quality of the revolver that he had gotten from his schoolmate, Welch, was unexpectedly good. Without any surprise, it would last for quite some time. Of course, he had to credit Dunn and Leonard for teaching him how to maintain a revolver.

To be honest, it doesn't matter if it's damaged. These are all things I can request compensation for.
Klein looked at the target, put away his revolver, and left the Shooting Club.

He took the public transport back to 2 Daffodil Street. Before arriving at his destination, he saw a young lady pacing about his door.

This lady was dressed in a blue lacy dress, as well as a thinly veiled hat. She was Melissa's classmate—Elizabeth who had her adorable baby fat.

She quickly approached when she saw Klein arrive, taking off her hat to reveal her joyful face.

She paused for two seconds before smiling.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti. I’m guessing that you just came back from Lamud Town, right?”

I’m sorry, I came back in the morning... Klein smiled.

“No, I came from Zouteland Street.”

Yes, that was a very honest answer... He laughed to himself.

Elizabeth froze for a moment, then said with excitement, “Alright, I guessed wrongly. I came to look for you because I wanted to tell you that I didn’t have that nightmare last night. I no longer dreamed about the knight in black armor! This was exactly the same as the result of your divination!”

Of course—that wraith was completely purified by Sealed Artifact 3-0782. I couldn’t channel his spirit even if I was there, much less your dream... Klein laughed and replied gently, “I’m happy that you’re freed from your troubles. I’m also very satisfied with my divination yesterday.”

“Thank you, thank you once again! Alright, I have to go now, I still have lessons in the afternoon. Bye bye, Mr. Moretti. I’ll visit Melissa when I have the time~” Elizabeth left joyfully, renting a carriage by the side of the road.

As the carriage began to roll forward, she smiled and thought proudly, *Melissa definitely doesn’t know how great her brother is...*

...

It seems as though my explanation just now was useless. Young ladies would rather trust their intuition and the truths made up in their minds... Klein saw Elizabeth board the carriage and opened the door to his house. He made his way to his room.

He rested for a while before he began to consolidate everything that had happened over the past week, including the questions he had yet to resolve.

After completing the task, he burned his notes, took out his pocket watch, and opened it.

“Half past two? There’s another fifteen minutes left...” Seeing that he still had time, Klein put on his oldest suit and headed to Smyrin Bakery at Iron Cross Street to buy a cup of sweet iced tea from Mrs. Wendy.

He drank his beverage as he returned, then sealed his room with a wall of spirituality at fifteen minutes to three. He then took four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog.

In the quiet, ancient palace, Klein conjured a piece of goatskin and wrote down a divination statement: “I should obtain the Clown potion through the Nighthawks.”

He put his pen down and untangled the spirit pendulum on his wrist. He grabbed the pendulum firmly with his left hand, allowing the topaz to be suspended right above the piece of paper.

He recited the statement seven times. His eyes darkened and the pendulum in his hand started to turn. It turned clockwise.

It’s a positive answer, so it’s appropriate. But it’ll be hard to say for the sequences after Clown. I should seriously develop my Tarot Club... Klein did another divination to confirm the answer.

After this, he used his hand and pressed down on the dark red star representing the Sun.

He wanted to bring the youth from the City of Silver in early and ask if he revealed whatever had happened in this world to the six-member council. If he hadn’t, then Klein would give him a better way of knowing what time the gatherings would start.

...

In a room of the Berg household in the City of Silver.

Derrick sat silently by the side of his bed, waiting for The Fool's summoning.

In order to avoid being near anybody, he didn't even go out of the house after he "returned." He had nearly finished all the food in his room.

Bearing with the hunger and hearing the growls of his stomach, Derrick felt as though he was a living corpse roaming around on a dark plain. However, he remained silent nor did he stand.

At that moment, he saw a dark red color spread in the air, quickly swallowing him.

The gray, boundless, cold, lonely world appeared in his field of vision once again. Seated at the seat of honor, The Fool, who was obscured by the thick fog, presented himself in front of him once more.

Klein was satisfied that his "summoning" wasn't interrupted. He also confirmed that he didn't face any immediate danger.

"Sun, we meet again," he said smilingly, using Jotun.

Derrick was shocked by what had happened. He lowered his head.

"You are a Fool who keeps his word."

"The other members will arrive in a while. Before that, I'll confirm a few things with you first." Klein used the Loen language this time, but willed the mysterious space to translate it into Jotun.

The words rang through the air, coming to Derrick in Jotun. He asked curiously,

"What's the matter?"

Well, now that I've gained a certain degree of mastery over Jotun, the mysterious space above the gray fog can translate whatever I say in real time. This means that I won't have to worry about Justice and The Hanged Man not understanding whatever Sun says... Sigh, why does a boss like me have to work so tirelessly? Klein pinched the bridge of his nose. He laughed and shook his head.

"I'll permit you to recite my name; remember the incantations I'm going to tell you."

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck"

Derrick's pupils constricted when he heard that, but he didn't dare to get distracted. He recited it over and over again in his heart, then confirmed it with The Fool.

"You have to use a simple ritual and recite my name whenever you return to the City of Silver... I will notify you in advance for future gatherings. You need not pay too much attention to it on other days, nor do you have to avoid anyone. When you receive my notification, isolate yourself within a thousand heartbeats." Klein told him the method he had been deliberating on for quite some time.

This was essentially a response to a prayer.

As he had to consider the situation regarding the City of Silver, as well as save time, Klein opted to omit the other steps of the ritual since it was a plea directed toward him.

"A thousand heartbeats?" Derrick muttered to himself.

Klein described the general idea of the Tarot Club to Derrick, then took out his pocket watch and looked at the time.

Derrick froze for a while, instinctively looking at the wondrous item.

When three approached, Klein extended his hand and pressed on the dark red stars representing Justice and The Hanged Man.

Derrick didn't blink as he witnessed this. He saw light burst forth opposite and beside him, as two hazy figures extended from within.

Audrey Hall surveyed her surroundings and froze suddenly. She then heard the ever-calm voice of Mr. Fool.

“This is our newest member, his code name is Sun.”

“This is Miss Justice, and that is Mr. Hanged Man.”

Newest member? Audrey was shocked at first, then her shock immediately turned to joy.

She was very excited to see the development of the Tarot Club. She felt like a protagonist.

The Hanged Man Alger creased his brows, a little upset that The Fool would drag in a new member so suddenly.

He should’ve at least mentioned it to us... But a great figure like Mr. Fool wouldn’t have to care about our feelings... He thought in exasperation before giving a simple greeting to Justice and Sun.

In this short process, Audrey entered the her Spectator state and paid close attention to the newest member Sun.

“He should be quite young... His body language tells me that he’s a little nervous and restrained... But he ultimately maintains a tolerable air of silence, giving the feeling of, hmm, a lone wolf, yes, a lone wolf...” Audrey thought as she cast her gaze at The Fool who was seated at the end of the long bronze table.

She said in joy, “Mr. Fool, I’ve collected another two pages of Emperor Roselle’s diary.”

Actually there were three pages, but the characters were too complicated and too difficult to memorize. My limit is only a little over two pages. I would mess up if I were to memorize more. The rest will have to wait until the next gathering... Audrey added in her head.

New pages of Roselle's diary? Klein's mind stirred. He smiled and asked in reply when he already knew the answer, "Miss Justice, what do you need?"

Audrey's eyes beamed with excitement, but she replied in a reserved manner, "You know that I'll soon fully digest the Spectator potion. I hope that I can get the formula for the Telepathist potion so that I can prepare the ingredients ahead of time. Hmm, I know that there isn't much content for two pages of the diary, and it might not equal to the value of the Telepathist formula, so I'll give you another page, hmm, I'll also pay you a sum of money on the side..."

She had yet to finish what she said when she suddenly felt that it had come out wrong. She couldn't help but berate herself in her head, *Mr. Fool is at the very least an important figure which approaches that of a god, how could he be bought over by money?!*

Hence, Audrey couldn't maintain her Spectator state as she hurriedly added with a stammer, "That's not what I meant! Mr. Fool, what I meant is that you can determine the compensation that you'd like. Yes, that's what I meant!"

I like your earlier suggestion... I would answer like this: When you have fully digested the Spectator potion, you will get the formula you need. I have a subordinate, no—I have to use the word "Blessed." That sounds more awesome. He happens to be handling some matters that require money, and this is his anonymous account in Backlund Bank... Yes, then I will disguise myself and make an anonymous account in Backlund Bank. Klein didn't answer immediately but weighed his words carefully with an unfathomable expression.

Backlund Bank was one of the seven major banks in the Loen Kingdom, and as such, it possessed the right to clear transactions.

The Loen Kingdom settled accounts with receipts to take care of cash transfer business between banks within the same city in a centralized manner. However, unlike banks in the Intis Republic, not all banks were part of the same league. The biggest seven banks held on to these rights. Hence, they were called the clearance banks, making other banks rely on them.

Transferring money from a different location, on the other hand, could only be done within the same bank. It would be completed by squaring accounts between branches. With the invention of the steam locomotive and telegram, the efficiency of these transfers had been enhanced drastically.

Just then, The Sun Derrick Berg, suddenly spoke.

"The Telepathist potion formula? Telepathist that is followed by Psyche Analyst?"

Audrey looked towards him puzzledly. "You know of it?"

At the same time, Miss Justice saw a problem through her instinct as a Spectator.

The young man had used the ancient title "Psyche Analyst" instead of the modern term, "Psychiatrist!"

This guy is very strange... Audrey examined Sun's every movement.

Derrick didn't think that he behaved any differently but replied seriously, "I can get you the formula!"

Then, he felt guilty as he couldn't provide it immediately. He tried his best to explain himself, "It's a Sequence pathway that stemmed from the Dragon race. And our City of Silver was once ruled by the Giant King's imperial household. As you know, the Giants and the Dragons are sworn enemies. Hence, the City of Silver has all of Sequence 9, 8, and 7. I have ways to get them."

This kid... I already warned him not to speak carelessly or expose his origins. In the end... Klein nearly wanted to extend his hand to cover his face.

Sigh, although The Sun appears to be in great pain, very mature and silent for his age, he's just a boy after all! However, that clarifies one thing for me... It turns out that the Spectator Sequence's origins stem from the Dragon race. It's no wonder that the symbol formed by stars behind Miss Justice's high chair is the Dragon... The City of Silver has preserved history well... Klein maintained his posture of leaning against the back of his chair while he listened thoughtfully to The Sun's description.

In fact, he could've easily stopped The Sun from exposing those matters. As long as he didn't help in the simultaneous translation, Justice and The Hanged Man wouldn't have understood him at all.

However, Klein took a different approach. He felt that it might help him consolidate his mighty and mysterious image in the minds of the three members effectively. Hence, he listened with a smile and didn't make a sound.

Giant King, Dragon race, the City of Silver... Audrey was confused. She first took a look at The Hanged Man opposite her, but she could tell that he was shocked and confused as well from his body language.

She looked sideways towards the seat of honor on the long bronze table. She saw The Fool sitting on the high chair, engulfed in thick grayish-white fog. His right arm was placed on the armrest while he leaned sideways leisurely. He showed no shock, no curiosity, no thoughts, and no doubt. He only looked at them with a smile.

He knows... He knew all of this... Audrey and Alger made the definite judgment almost at the same time.

"The City of Silver, I've never heard of this place... Where is it?" Audrey probed while Alger listened attentively.

At that very moment, Derrick Berg's head was filled with questions as well. He could tell that, besides the godlike Fool, Justice and The Hanged Man were some sort of Beyonder.

In the Forsaken Land of God, besides the people in the City of Silver, Derrick had never seen another living human.

So, he asked in reply, "If you aren't residents of the City of Silver, which city-state are you from?"

Sigh... Klein couldn't help but wish to sigh again.

Audrey trembled her lips, momentarily at a loss for words.

Yes, the hidden meaning behind his question is that if you don't want to answer a similar question, don't pry into the questions about where the other person lives... Miss Justice nodded faintly and elegantly kept quiet.

Obviously, Alger had misunderstood The Sun's intentions as well. He didn't know the other person was really just asking straightforwardly. So, he kept quiet too.

When Derrick didn't receive any reply, he seemed to realize what was happening. He didn't bring it up again and instead said,

"I will try to get the Telepathist potion formula as soon as possible. I would like to use it to exchange for the beginning Sequence pathway of the Sun."

"Sun Sequence pathway? Sequence 9 Bard?" Alger asked in reply.

Derrick thought and said, "Probably, but I lack information about

it."

Klein who was watching from the side decided to get involved, because he didn't want to risk anyone taking his business away.

He smiled and said, "I believe Miss Justice doesn't have the Bard formula."

But Mr. Hanged Man seems to be able to get it...

Seeing Audrey nod, Klein continued with a faint smile, "I will give The Sun the Bard formula. The Sun will pass the Telepathist potion to Miss Justice as soon as possible. Try to get it done within the next two Gatherings. Miss Justice, please pass me the new pages of Roselle's diary. Then, the deal is done."

"Yes, according to the law of equivalent exchange, The Sun is on the losing end of this transaction, but as of now, he has only made a promise. When he really provides the Telepathist formula, Miss Justice can consider how to compensate him again, or I will compensate him while Miss Justice provides money to one of my Blessed who needs to do somethings recently. Heh heh, that's because The Sun might not necessarily be able to receive Miss Justice's cash or ingredients as compensation."

Klein intentionally added that final statement to redirect The Hanged Man and Justice's focus onto the fact that Sun might not be able to receive her compensation. He also did that to place himself in an unfathomable position; then, everyone would ignore the Blessed that lacked money.

Might not necessarily receive the compensation... Where exactly is The Sun? The Southern Continent? Alger suddenly creased his eyebrows.

The origin of The Sun is mysterious too... As expected, Mr. Fool does have subordinates in reality. Audrey finally saw her hope of becoming a Sequence 8 Telepathist. What other thoughts could she have? She suppressed her excitement and flashed a faint smile as she said, "I have no objections."

"Neither do I." When Derrick saw that he could obtain the beginning sequence of the Sun pathway, he nodded without hesitation. He couldn't care less about the additional compensation.

Alger, who was out of the three-way deal, didn't have the right to speak. Although he could get the formula of Bard, he would need to wait a week or two as well.

At that moment, Klein, who had successfully delayed the compensation to the next Gathering, or the following one after, pressed his palm forward happily. The Bard formula surfaced.

"Main ingredients: a Crystal Sunflower or an adult Flint Bird's tail feather or a Fire Bird's tail feather... A piece of Siren Rock or a Singing Sunflower...

Supplementary ingredients: a blade of Midsummer Grass, 5 drops of July Wine Juice, a blade of Elf Dark Leaf..."

He sent the formula before The Sun and saw the young man first crease his eyebrows and then relax.

Yes, the ingredients in the Forsaken Land of God will still be known by their ancient names. Luckily, my formula was obtained directly from the Eternal Blazing Sun. The knowledge that I gained used ancient names and various replacements... Klein suddenly cast his eyes of realization towards Miss Justice.

Audrey looked at The Sun who was memorizing the formula, then she quickly willed the two pages of the diary that she had memorized.

The diary immediately appeared on the yellowish-brown goatskin and, with a flash, appeared in Klein's hands.

Just like before, he started reading immediately.

"3rd November, Matilda is three months pregnant now. I even find those maidservants who come from the villages beautiful. No, I can't lower my standards. Coincidently, Countess Florais has invited me to join a private party, hehe.

“8th November, Archbishop Fan Estin sought my help. Huh, what can I do for an archbishop?

“9th November, it turns out that there is actually a secret hidden within Sequence pathways. Archbishop Estin told me that after becoming a Sequence 5 Beyonder, the rest of the Sequences could be replaced with Sequences of the same level from one or two other pathways! In other words, it starts from the Mid-Sequence to High-Sequence! But this is only limited between those one or two pathways. If it’s replaced with a potion from a wrong pathway, semi-insanity is the mildest outcome, and one can’t advance any further.

“This way, one can begin substituting pathways from Sequence 4 onwards. Sleepless and Corpse Collector pathways. Yes, the Church’s Savant and Mystery Pryer pathways can also substitute for one another at a High Sequence.”

CHAPTER 145: REQUEST FOR COOPERATION

Some pathways are interchangeable after Sequence 5? That's different from what the Nighthawks told me!

Isn't it a fact that you cannot change your pathway after you choose one? Wasn't it mentioned that diverging from your pathway would allow one to obtain strange, mysterious powers, but that person would definitely go insane and would never be able to advance?

To think that there are some hidden exceptions to this!

Klein looked at the diary, his pupils constricting.

He didn't think that Emperor Roselle would spout nonsense about something like this. After all, the surprise in his words were so real. But he didn't assume that the information Emperor Roselle had received was definitely correct. There was also a possibility that he had been lied to, or that he had misinterpreted the information.

I will need to verify this. I'll commit it to my memory first... Klein reminded himself, then thought deeply about this.

If what Roselle described here turns out to be correct, then the Sequence pathways go deeper than what I imagined... It hides many secrets...

The complete pathway possessed by the Nighthawks is Sleepless. They also possess a relatively complete path in the Corpse Collector, which they have up to Sequence 4. To think that those are interchangeable after Sequence 5... The other potion chains they have are even less complete, as some pathways only possess the first Sequence...

Similarly, the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery holds the complete pathway of the Savant, and has a relatively complete pathway for the Mystery Pryer. These can also be interchanged at High Sequences...

Interesting... I wonder which pathway is interchangeable with the Seer pathway? The Apprentice or Marauder that was mentioned by the Emperor?

Hmm, there's a high possibility that the first five Sequence pathways of the Seer pathway would each provide a separate ability, and that these abilities would be combined at Sequence 4. At that stage, there should be no way to interchange it with some other potion... Klein retracted his thoughts, once again placing his attention onto the diary.

He noticed that although the two diary pages were connected, the content was not in chronological order. The dates belonged to two different periods. This could be a mistake made by whoever copied their content.

"9th April. The relationships between the Church of the Eternal

Blazing Sun, the Church of Storms, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom are poor. They see each other as enemies. The Church of Evernight is at odds with the Church of the God of Combat from the Feysac Empire. This can be taken advantage of. These are all facts worth considering."

"13th April. I participated in an ancient organization's gathering. I never expected them to be members of this organization as well. It sure was frightening."

"To think that the second Blasphemy Slate was in the hands of this organization. This is the first time I'm seeing this legendary item!"

“Indeed, it was hiding an unimaginable secret, hehe. Perhaps there will come a day when I will create a Blasphemy Slate unique to me. No, a set of them, with each one hiding an ultimate secret!”

*Holy f**k, Emperor, why didn’t you specify the name of this ancient organization!? You’re killing me! Perhaps—perhaps, Roselle had a reason, or didn’t dare to write down the name of the organization, even if he was using Chinese...* Klein looked at the diary, a little uncomfortable and puzzled.

But with this page of the diary, Klein could finally confirm that Emperor Roselle had seen the second Blasphemy Slate. Furthermore, he created a set of cards after that, each card represented a path of the divine.

Yes, that could be the ultimate secret that matches each path of the divine. I wonder where that set of twenty-two cards are now?

That ancient organization managed to obtain the second Blasphemy Slate... Klein’s thoughts flowed quickly.

But he quickly reined in his thoughts. He shifted his gaze away from the diary and shot it towards The Hanged Man, Justice, and The Sun. He smiled and said, “Actually, you didn’t need to wait for me.”

“It’s our honor.” Alger had already reined in his dissatisfaction as he answered humbly.

Audrey thought for a moment before smiling.

“Mr. Fool, the open selection of government officials through examinations that you described previously has already garnered the support of the King and the Prime Minister. It will soon be passed by the House of Lords and the House of Commons and is predicted to be implemented early next year.”

“It looks like the King and the Prime Minister still use their brains,” Alger mocked out of habit.

Well, with Benson’s intellect and diligence, his grammatical and accounting skills should be passable by early next year... But once it’s passed by the two Houses, it will definitely be announced widely by the various newspapers. I wonder how long Benson’s advantage will last? The earlier the examination, the better...

Sigh, there’s no way Benson can triumph over the elites who graduated from the various universities in such a short period of time. But he need not compete against them; the positions they’re fighting for wouldn’t be the same. Those people might only have their sights trained on positions such as the Cabinet secretary, or Finance secretary... The silent Klein worried for his brother as he nodded his head with a smile.

Audrey straightened her back when she saw The Fool’s affirmative nod. She said with a smile, “Mr. Hanged Man, you got me to check on something for you previously. I’ve received an answer. The King has been convinced by the Prime Minister and won’t seek revenge on the Feysac Empire at the East Balam Shore for the time being. I think you can now give me the extra payment that you promised me.”

Alger thought for a few seconds before saying, “Miss Justice, thank you for your answer. This eases my concerns over certain things. What kind of extra payment do you want? I’ll consider it if it’s within reason.”

Audrey smiled, obviously prepared.

“Clues to the Psychology Alchemists, or clues to the main ingredients of the potion Telepathist. Of course, that can wait until after The Sun hands the formula over to me.” “No problem,” Alger said without hesitation.

Two seats away from The Hanged Man, Derrick Berg couldn't understand a single word. He was very confused, feeling that he only understood a few terms, but couldn't string them together to provide any logical sense.

A method of selecting officials through examination? A King and Prime Minister, House of Lords, House of Commons, East Balam Shore, Feysac Empire, Psychology Alchemists? He understood none of that.

Feysac, the root of the word came from Jotun. What connection did it have with the fallen Giant King's imperial household? Derrick looked at Justice and The Hanged Man, suddenly having the feeling that they might not come from the same world.

Could there be another city-state, or one that had formed a nation, somewhere far away from the City of Silver in the cursed lands? Derrick remained silent and listened on. He had a faint understanding of why the mysterious Fool mentioned that he might not be able to receive the monetary compensation Justice was going to give him.

To be able to gather people this far away from each other, disregarding the terrifying monsters hiding in the darkness of the cursed lands, The Fool might really be a god, an ancient god... he thought.

After accomplishing everything that she set out to do, Audrey wanted to become a silent observer, but she suddenly remembered something. She spoke in a hurry, "I recently came into contact with a Beyonder circle and found out about a powerful person named Mr. A. Mr. Fool, Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Sun, do you know of this person's background and identity?"

I don't even know what you're talking about... Derrick maintained his silence.

Mr. A? I only know a Mr. Z... With such a similar code name, could he also be from the Aurora Order? Klein made a guess, but didn't give an answer.

He had to maintain his image and try not to give answers he wasn't confident in. If he had to, he would give a vague description just like a charlatan.

Alger looked at The Fool and found him calm and unchanging. It was hard to read his true thoughts. Thus, he said in a deliberative tone, "The Aurora Order is at odds with the Church of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, so members of these Churches understand the Aurora Order more than any other organization. And I happen to know something about them."

You need not explain, I know that you come under the Lord of Storms. Of course, you could be a whistleblower... But why would there be hatred between the Aurora Order and the three ancient Churches? Klein smiled but didn't speak. He looked calmly at The Hanged Man.

Alger knew that he couldn't hide his Sequence pathway from The Fool, but didn't pay too much attention to it and continued.

"The Aurora Order has five Saints and twenty-two Oracles. These Oracles use the alphabet as their code names, such as Mr. A or Mr. X. They are Beyonders, with the weakest being Sequence 7 and the strongest Sequence 5. They are all adept at hiding themselves. Should a Oracle die, a new Oracle will take their place."

"I cannot guarantee that the Mr. A you spoke of is the Mr. A from the Aurora Order, but there is a

good possibility. As for the details of the Aurora Order, I have mentioned that to you before."

Audrey nodded, becoming even more cautious of Mr. A.

She said, feeling a little pinch in her heart, "Thank you for your answer, Mr. Hanged Man. You need not make a payment anymore."

“No, I wish to ask for your help with the answer just now, as well as provide extra compensation,” Alger said with a deep voice.

“What help?” Audrey asked curiously.

Alger thought for a few seconds before saying, “I received intelligence that the pirate Qilangos, codenamed Vice Admiral Hurricane, has secretly gone onshore and infiltrated Backlund. I don’t know what he’s up to, but I hope that you can help me locate his whereabouts. As for whatever happens afterwards, you need not put yourself in danger.”

“Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos? One of the seven great admiral pirates?” Audrey widened her eyes, almost unable to maintain her Spectator state.

What was the thing she wanted to do the most after she became a Beyonder? It was, of course, to interact with the people that only existed in the fables of the nobles!

“Yes, he’s a Sequence 6 Beyonder of the path of the Sailor, a Wind-blessed. He also has a miraculous item that could be classified as a Sealed Artifact. He’s quite crafty and cruel. Don’t attempt to deal with him,” Alger introduced seriously.

He suddenly turned to Klein.

“Mr. Fool, can I get your Blessed to assist me at the critical moment? I would pay a price that interests you.”

The only Blessed I have is myself... Klein lampooned to ease his emotions as he smiled.

“That is built on the premise that my Blessed happens to be in Backlund.”

“Alright.” Alger retracted his gaze, a little disappointed, but also a little expectant.

CHAPTER 146: CREEPING HUNGER

"What's so special about Qilangos's mystical item?" Audrey asked slightly confidently.

She considered it carefully and suddenly realized that she had a decent ability to locate people in Backlund.

Firstly, her father was one of the most wealthy, connected, and reputable nobles, while she was quite popular amongst the younger generation too. Hence, in the upper-middle class of the society, she had quite a few resources to take advantage of.

Secondly, the two Beyonders that she knew had their own circles as well. Apprentice Fors was originally a clinical doctor, and was now an author. She knew quite a number of people in the literary world and publishing industry, as well as among the middle-class doctors.

Arbiter Xio Derecha had helped many middle-lower class people to coordinate and mediate disputes over a long period of time. She was also quite famous in East Backlund borough among the working class and mafia. She had a lot of hidden channels.

Plus, considering the Beyonders that they knew and their circles of influence, their ability to look for a person wasn't to be belittled.

Towards Justice's question, Alger answered almost straightaway without hesitation or thought.

"No one knows the real name of the mystical item, but the people who have come into contact with it call it the 'Creeping Hunger.' Qilangos uses a living person's soul and flesh to satisfy it every other day. Otherwise, it would consume its owner as a replacement."

"This could be one of the most important clues to seek out Qilangos," Audrey said, creasing her eyebrows.

She felt utter discomfort and extreme hatred towards any evil item that desired a living human's fresh blood and soul.

"Yes, but in a big city with at least five million people, a few vagrants going missing wouldn't be noticed," Alger reminded her. "Ever since he got his hands on the Creeping Hunger, Qilangos has been very difficult to deal with."

"He was originally a Wind-blessed. He possesses great Beyonder power in domains related to water, wind, and the weather. But, later on, people realized that he could drive his targets crazy, enter the dreams of others, summon light to purify a dead soul, sing to strengthen himself, and change his appearance... There's almost nothing that he can't do," Alger described in detail. "We suspect that those are all effects that came from the mystical item, Creeping Hunger..."

Before he finished sharing, Derrick Berg, who had been listening quietly, suddenly blurted, "Shepherd!"

Shepherd? Sequence 5 of the Secrets Suppliant and Listener pathway? Hmm, among the six-member council in the City of Silver, there is a new elder who's a Shepherd. Sun had mentioned that she's strong enough to fight against a Sequence 4 expert, well —an evil spirit of the same grade... Klein's expression changed slightly, but it was covered by the gray fog. Justice wasn't paying any attention to him either.

"Shepherd?"

"Shepherd?"

Justice and The Hanged Man asked in unison. One sounded completely confused while the other sounded shocked, as though they had heard the title of Shepherd elsewhere before and knew something about it, but didn't understand the actual situation.

Seeing that everyone was staring at him, Derrick suddenly panicked a little. No matter how quiet, depressed, and vexed he was, he was a boy after all.

He hurriedly explained with a stammer, "What I meant was, the traits that The Hanged Man described were like the Beyonder power of the Sequence job, Shepherd. Every Shepherd can swallow another's soul into their body, including wraiths and evil spirits. They control these souls to do their bidding with a unique method, which allows them to make use of their abilities, just like letting a god's lambs out to graze.

"Hence, no one knows how many powers a Shepherd has. That depends on how many Beyonder souls they have swallowed, and that makes them very scary. They're almost like a High-Sequence Beyonder.

"However, there are people who suspect that for Shepherds there's a limit to the number of souls when Devouring and Grazing, and that the souls inside them could be replaced as well."

So that's what being a Shepherd means... The Sequence pathway that the Aurora Order has in its control is enigmatic... No wonder they worship the True Creator, no, the Fallen Creator... Klein was suddenly enlightened, but he didn't nod, taking on the appearance that he knew so long ago.

Meanwhile, he sighed inwardly. *Sun, you are a boy after all. This is very important information, very important insight. You could've exchanged it for valuable things, but you just revealed it all! Just like that...*

Yes, the ability demonstrated by the mystical item Creeping Hunger is similar to a Sequence 5 Shepherd... I wonder if other Sealed Artifacts have the same powers of Beyonders? I wonder which Sequence the Sealed Artifact 2-049, the Antigonus family's puppet, resembles...

After listening to Sun's explanation, Alger seemed to have sorted out the puzzle in his mind as he nodded in silence.

Audrey got even more curious and pressed, "Which Sequence pathway is Shepherd from? Which number is it?"

"The Secrets Suppliant pathway, Sequence 5." Klein seized the opportunity to answer so as to demonstrate that he knew everything.

"Secrets Suppliant... Aurora Order..." Audrey suddenly recalled Mr. A, who was a suspected Oracle of the Aurora Order, and she immediately felt heavy-hearted.

She started thinking seriously, thinking of what price she could pay in exchange for Mr. Fool to take action and rid off that disgusting fellow effortlessly. However, she couldn't think of anything that would move Mr. Fool into doing so.

As expected, a figure akin to a god wouldn't be easily moved...

There aren't many things and matters that would garner their interest after all... Audrey sighed.

Putting her impulse aside, she nodded to The Sun gratefully, thanking him for giving them a new perspective on Creeping Hunger, so that they could deal with it more reasonably and efficiently.

"Mr. Hanged Man, I'm willing to accept the mission. But I can't guarantee if I can find Vice Admiral Hurricane, Qilangos." Audrey looked opposite her when she spoke.

"There's no better answer than this. Regardless of your success, as long as you try, I will definitely compensate you with things like secret information or intelligence. And if you succeed, maybe I could provide you the Telepathist's main ingredients directly. Of course, the prerequisite is that we have to know what it is," Alger promised generously, which was a rare sight.

“Deal,” Audrey pursed her lips and replied with a faint smile.

Then, Alger created Qilangos’ portrait with Klein’s permission and assistance.

He was one of the seven major pirate admirals. He had a distinctive broad chin, brown hair tied into a bun at the back of his head like an ancient warrior, and green eyes that seemed to hint at laughter, but were abnormally cold..

After they finished their discussion and shared their insights, Klein smiled as he announced the ending of the Gathering. He saw Justice and The Hanged Man get up swiftly from their seats and bow while The Sun mimicked their motions, only slower.

He pressed forward with his right hand and severed the connection, but he didn’t leave immediately.

...

In the Berg household in the City of Silver.

Derrick looked at his familiar surroundings and glanced outside at the dark sky that had flashes of lightning. He was momentarily thrown into a trance.

But he soon jolted to his senses. He searched for goatskin and a quill before writing down the Bard formula he memorized.

He looked at it several times and was finally certain that there was nothing wrong with it.

Derrick wasn’t worried that possessing the Bard formula and becoming a different Beyonder would gain the suspicion of the upper echelons of the City of Silver. This was because in past exploratory expeditions, members of those elite troops would often collect some formulas, ingredients, and strange artifacts from the monsters in the abandoned and destroyed cities.

During this process, it was normal that people kept some of the loot privately. As long as it didn’t involve anything too important, the captains and higher-ups would tacitly overlook it.

Over time, some formulas started going around through nonofficial channels within the City of Silver. Some became the foundation of strong families from generation to generation. The Things of the Dark surrounding the City of Silver were relatively fixed. Some ingredients could be obtained easily while some could only be encountered if one went far into the cursed land.

Putting aside the goatskin, Derrick recalled the mysterious Fool’s instructions. Hence, in his simple bedroom, he lowered his head and simply prayed,

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era.”

“The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.”

“The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.”

...

Jotun was a very ancient language. It came equipped with the mystical properties demanded by rituals, prayers, and spell casting; therefore, Derrick didn’t need to change the incantations into ancient Hermes.

...

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era.”

...

Klein, who was seated at the seat of honor at the long bronze table, suddenly heard prayers reverberating in his ears. He then saw the crimson star that corresponded to Sun blinking.

He didn’t try to touch it, but planned to reply to him ten minutes before the next Gathering so that the City of Silver youth would make preparations to be alone.

The most important part was for him to evade the conversion of time and date, to decrease the possibility of damaging Fool's mighty image.

After he confirmed that, Klein wrapped himself up with spirituality and stimulated a descent.

Returning to his room, Klein removed the spirituality wall and took a break before he got ready to head out again.

It wasn't necessary for him to play the role of a Seer, and he didn't have to fix his trip to the Divination Club into his daily schedule. He would only visit occasionally to make some extra pocket money and fulfill his supervision as a Nighthawk.

Originally, Klein wanted to laze around through the entire afternoon, but he suddenly thought of something that he had yet to do. So, he had no choice but to gather himself up. According to his appointment, he had to pay Detective Henry a visit that day and accept the final report about the red chimney investigation.

Sigh. I've heard that the big timers are all quite busy... I still have to spare some time to go to the Tingen Family Servant Assistance Association with Benson and Melissa to look for a good maidservant... Klein unwillingly changed his shirt, put on his black tuxedo, and held his silk top hat and silver-inlaid cane before walking out the door like a gentleman.

At Besik Street, under Henry's Private Detective Company, Klein put on a mask and lowered his hat as he went across the street quickly and entered the stairway.

CHAPTER 147: NIGHT VISITOR

In the office of the private investigator.

"Sir, your request has been completed," Detective Henry said to the gentleman in front of him with his hoarse voice. He heaved a sigh of relief. "This wasn't an easy mission, nor was it too difficult, but it used up a great deal of our resources and energy. To be honest, I'm a little regretful. I regret setting too low a price for this mission."

No, no matter what you say, I will not pay a single penny more! Klein emphasized in his heart. He pointed at the thick stack of documents on the coffee table and asked, "Is this the investigation report?"

"Yes." Henry pressed on the report that had at least sixty pages and sighed. "This is the most troublesome report that I've completed..."

He hadn't even finished his sentence when he saw Klein hand over four pounds in cash. His attention shifted to determining the authenticity of the notes.

"This is the remainder of the fees." Klein held the thick stack of notes.

Henry coughed.

"You sure are a gentleman that keeps to his word. Sigh. I didn't expect the investigation report to use this many pieces of paper.

It was completely out of my budget."

At that moment, Klein took the thick investigation report and stood up.

He gave a slight bow and immediately made his way to the door with his cane in hand.

Detective Henry's last sentence was left stuck in his throat.

Hey, how can you expect me to pay for the paper used in the investigation report? That should be included in the fees already! Klein touched the five pounds eight soli he had left and muttered in his heart. He walked quickly onto Besik Street.

He surveyed the surroundings and confirmed that no one was paying attention to him before leaving the place. He found an opportunity to remove his mask.

Klein didn't intend to head home right away. He wanted to search for a cafe and organize the investigation report. He wanted to find the houses that had a change in tenants after divining the red chimney. He could then conduct his search before dinner.

There were many cafes in the area, but none of them met Klein's criteria. Ever since steam and machinery became the symbol of the times, more and more cafes had toned down on their decor and become something like cheap restaurants. They provided refreshments, coffee, bread, and dishes like pea and mutton stew to the busy workers. Thus, respectable ladies and gentlemen no longer went to cafes to discuss things. They no longer viewed these actions as being symbolic of their status. Various clubs started appearing and replaced cafes as a place for socializing.

After some time, Klein finally found a cafe that had a decent atmosphere.

He sat in a secluded corner and took a sip of his one-penny Southville Coffee before flipping open the investigation report.

"In Tingen City's North Borough, South Borough, East Borough, West Borough, Golden Indus, Harbor Borough, and University Borough, there are a total of 1179 buildings that have a dark red chimney... Along the outskirts of Tingen City, there are a total of 546 buildings with the red chimney the requester described. This doesn't include buildings in towns or villages that are relatively further away despite them falling under the jurisdiction of Tingen."

"Below are the addresses and tenant records of each of those buildings. As per the request, the activities within the last three months are recorded in more detail."

...

Klein flipped through page after page, occasionally making notes on paper he brought around with a fountain pen.

Finally, when he found the type of red chimney he had seen, he realized that there was a change of tenants in twenty-five buildings.

That's not too many. I should try to finish my investigations within two days. After all, I've seen that red chimney and parts of the house in my dream. My spiritual sense would have a feeling of familiarity when I see those signs again. I'll confirm the target that way. In other words, I'm a living investigation machine... Klein nodded. He split the buildings based on their location and planned to investigate fifteen of them that day.

He didn't need to do a divination to get an answer if these investigations would prove dangerous.

Since there was a change of tenants, that would mean that the mastermind behind the coincidences had already left!

Let's hope that the new tenants know what the previous tenants look like... But since the person behind the scenes can control my fate without anyone noticing, to the point of making the coincidences feel so natural, he would definitely have a way to remove any traces he might have left behind... Sigh, I can only pray to the Goddess and hope that he left behind some sort of clue... Klein sighed. He pumped himself up and put on his hat. He then grabbed his cane and the report before leaving the cafe.

Klein spent two soli on a rented carriage and visited fifteen buildings with the red chimneys before dinner. Unfortunately, none of the buildings was the one he saw in his dream.

It would be quite troublesome if tomorrow's investigation yields the same result. He might still be living in the house with the red chimney even after I saw it in my divination. This could say that he is very confident and isn't afraid of my investigation; in fact, he might not even be afraid of the Tingen Nighthawks. Or perhaps, he doesn't know that he's been exposed. That would mean that the power resisting my divination was a power not belonging to him... Klein stood in front of 2 Daffodil Street and analyzed the various possibilities.

A few minutes later, he patted down his tuxedo and pressed on his hat before taking out his key and entering the house with a smile.

He intended to prepare stewed mutton and honey glazed barbecue for Benson and Melissa that night.

...

At eleven in the evening, the siblings bade each other goodnight and returned to their respective rooms.

Klein closed the door to his room and stood before his desk. He looked outside the oriel window with the light of his gas lamp. At that moment, the streets were engulfed in darkness, with only a few street lamps illuminating the way. Stars dotted the screen that was the night sky. There were many stars, they were just not clearly visible.

"I wonder what Backlund is like, with its titles of the Land of Hope and the Capital of Capitals..." Klein muttered to himself. He extended his hand to grab his curtain, intending to draw it.

Woo!

At that moment, a sinister wind blew at him without warning. The light from his lamp turned a dark green.

Klein subconsciously took a few steps back. His occupational instincts made him tap his left molars twice. At the same time, he leaned toward the bed and tried to reach for his revolver under his pillow.

In his vision, a face suddenly protruded from the wall above the desk and under the gas lamp. It was a translucent face without any eyes or nose. All it had was a mouth!

"Do not fire." The face with a mouth spoke.

It can communicate? Klein already had his revolver in hand as he took aim.

"What do you want?" he asked in a deep voice.

The face chuckled.

"I'm Daly."

Daly? Spirit Medium Daly? The Spirit Medium Daly who was sent to the Backlund diocese? Klein raised his brows in doubt.

"Madam Daly?"

"I know that this method of visiting you is a little rude. I should've given you a warning so you could make the necessary preparations. But it isn't convenient for me to meet you right now, and so, I can only communicate with you using this little guy." The translucent face laughed.

Even though the voice is different and jarring, the manner of speech is indeed Madam Daly's style. The abilities of a Spirit Medium sure are cool... Klein reflected wistfully. He didn't lower his revolver as he asked, "Madam, what do you want to talk about with me?"

"If I were you, I would first seal the bedroom with spirituality. Otherwise, your family members might think of you as crazy." The translucent face quipped, "Heh heh, you need not be so cautious. I came back to Tingen in secret because of Dunn's letter. You know that a Nighthawk cannot leave the area they are assigned to at will."

"The Captain's letter?" Klein didn't approach the desk. Instead, he felt for the Holy Night Powder he had in the hidden pocket of his black trench coat.

"Dunn and I are both Beyonders that started with the Tingen Nighthawks. We have always maintained a good relationship. Last Thursday, yes, Thursday, he sent me a letter and mentioned you. He said that you emulated the maxim of a Mystery Pryer, came up with a set of rules for a Seer, and claimed that it was effective in helping you grasp your potion. From then on, you no longer hear sounds and see visions that you shouldn't. Dunn said that it was similar to what I did.

"Heh heh, are you not going to seal the room? I personally do not mind your brother and sister misunderstanding..." the translucent face said at an adequate pace.

So that's the reason... She's indeed Madam Daly... Klein heaved a sigh of relief, pushing the Holy Night Powder back into the inner pocket. He then walked to the desk and took out the silver dagger he used for rituals from the drawer.

He quickly built up a wall of spirituality before turning to the protruding face.

"Madam Daly, what else did the Captain talk about in the letter?"

"He only expressed his own confusion and said that he seemed to understand something*—*yet, he couldn't describe it clearly. He hoped to get my opinion on the matter," Daly said with the help of the face without eyes. "And when I read the letter this morning, I knew that you aren't as clueless as you pretend to be. Heh heh, Mr. Moretti, I think that you have deduced the 'acting method!'"

"That's the reason you came looking for me?" Klein neither confirmed nor denied her statement.

Daly clearly knows about the "acting method"... He calmly made the judgment.

Daly's translucent face revealed a slight smile.

"Yes."

“I believe that we should be honest with each other. I know that you have deduced the acting method, and you also know that I grasp the ‘acting method’ as well. Sigh. But what’s making me unhappy is that I used nearly two years to understand it*—*yet, you’ve only been a Beyonder for one and a half months.”

Klein fell silent for a while after hearing Daly. He then smiled honestly.

“That’s because I have you as my role model.”

He wanted to say that he was “standing on the shoulders of giants,” but ultimately decided not to give Emperor Roselle a chance to appear in the conversation.

Klein's reply made Daly chuckle. The translucent face with only a mouth said, "Even though you found inspiration through the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and confirmed your theories through my experience and performance, it only took you a month to understand the 'acting method' and come up with your own Seer principle. That shows that you possess outstanding wisdom and an open mind."

Klein didn't engage in the topic which made him guilty, but instead asked in response, "Madam, do the higher-ups in the church know about this so-called 'acting method?'"

"No doubt, they understand it very clearly. I once read through the historical information in the church and searched through stories of people ignoring the norms and advancing quickly. I realized that there were more than a few Nighthawks and bishops who have done so, I'm not the most unique one either. But their ending..." Daly intentionally paused, and she suddenly sounded heavy-hearted.

"What kind of ending did they have?" Klein asked, feeling a tug at his heartstrings.

Could it be that the Church of Evernight views the "acting method" as the seduction of some devil or evil god?

The translucent face suddenly laughed. "Their endings were rather great. Besides the few who lost control or were sacrificed in Beyonder incidents, the rest of them have at least become archbishops or high-ranking deacons. Among them, there are also experts that have successfully become High-Sequence Beyonders. In the Church of the Goddess, Sequence 4's and Sequence 3's are called Saints, while Sequence 2's and Sequence 1's are called Grounded Angels. Of course, every angel was once a Saint."

...Madam Daly, you deliberately tried to scare me earlier... the corner of Klein's lips twitched before he asked, without hiding his suspicions, "Since the Church has mastered the 'acting method,' why didn't they just tell every Nighthawk? Although it wouldn't prevent every Nighthawk from losing control, it would definitely lower the probability and reduce unnecessary losses."

A sense of loss appeared on the translucent face. "I have no idea why either. They told me that when I become an archbishop or high-ranking deacon, I'll be able to know the secret. I came here today because I hope that you can tell Dunn about the 'acting method' more clearly before you hand in your special request."

Klein wasn't stupid enough to ask why she couldn't do that herself; instead, he said thoughtfully, "Once noticed by the Church, one has to swear not to tell anyone about the 'acting method?'"

"Yes, you must do it before the Goddess's holy items and swear upon Her name. That holds enough binding force. Trust me, you definitely don't want to know the outcome of a violation. I can only talk about it with people who have mastered the 'acting method,' like you. Your body language already gave me the answer before you replied; that's why I dared to say the term." Daly made the creepy face sigh.

She paused for a moment before saying, "I only faintly grasped the essence of 'acting' back then and digested the potion very quickly. Yes, among the higher-ups in the Church, using the term 'digesting' to describe the control of the potion is very aptly worded. Anyway, before I made the pledge and found out about the 'acting method,' I had no clear understanding of it, so I couldn't accurately explain it to Dunn and the others.

"I gave up at first. I never thought that I would meet you, an eccentric wonder that could clearly understand the 'acting method' before handing in a special application—no, a genius."

So that's how you see me, Madam... the corner of Klein's mouth twitched before he solemnly promised, "I originally intended to remind Captain about the existence of the 'acting method' through my special application. With your explanation, I don't have to worry further."

“Very well, you’re such a kind lad.” Daly sounded relaxed.

Madam, you’re only about two to three years older than me... Klein inwardly pointed out the error in her words.

Without him speaking any further, the translucent creepy face continued, “If you have any problems or anything that you require assistance with, you can write a letter to me. Wait for me, heh heh. When I become an Archbishop or a high-ranking deacon which allows me to understand why the Church hides the ‘acting method,’ I’ll give you a hint whether if it’s a good or bad thing.

Klein was suddenly energized, and he asked without hesitation, “Madam, what’s your address?”

To him, the more help he got, the merrier. Plus, she was a pretty strong Spirit Medium!

Seeing that Klein didn’t oppose the idea at all, Daly remained silent for a while before she laughed.

“Our communication shouldn’t go through the post office, as we would be using normal letters. That’s very dangerous.

“I’ll teach you a relatively easy ritualistic magic. You can use it to summon a special spirit, one that belongs to me. Pass the letter to it, and it’ll send it precisely to me. It wouldn’t be faster than a telegram, but it’s faster than a steam locomotive. If you were to send a message at noon, I would receive the message in Backlund that same night.”

Klein listened to her with his full attention. He nodded faintly. “A very pragmatic ritualistic magic.”

Daly chuckled.

“The uniqueness of the ritualistic magic is to pray to yourself. Obtaining power from your own spirituality, without going through a god. Hence, it’s quite secretive, but it isn’t very powerful.

“...First, you select a herb and essential oil in the corresponding domain. This is no different than normal ritualistic magic. However, you only need the candle that represents yourself. Then, regarding the spell, there are three parts. The first part is ‘I.’ Shout ‘I’ in either ancient Hermes, Jotun, Dragonish, or Elvish. The second part is ‘I summon in my name.’ That part can be said in Hermes. The third part is the exact description of the summoning object. For instance, you would use this in the future: ‘the spirit that wanders about the unfounded, the higherdimensional creature that a human orders, the messenger that belongs to Daly Simone.”

Higher-dimensional? In mysticism, this is normally referred to as the spirit world... Klein memorized as he analyzed the ritual procedure.

In that aspect, he could barely be considered an expert.

The benefit of this kind of ritualistic magic is that it avoids calling upon a god but relies purely on a person’s power. It achieves various magical effects without the constraints imposed by a god’s specialized domain. The problem lies in the strength of a person. A weak result for the weak, and a strong result for the strong... Klein felt that he had once again obtained new mysticism knowledge that he would’ve never come into contact with at his current Sequence.

Daly repeated the description a few times and emphasized solemnly, “Remember, don’t change the actual description of the summoning object, or the ritual could easily attract a terrifying monster.”

“Okay.” Klein nodded honestly.

At the same time, he suddenly thought of something.

If I were to change the description of the summoning object to “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck,” what would be summoned?

Would it be utterly useless, or would the gray fog suddenly descend, or would I need to respond in that mysterious space?

Would this help me in stirring more power from the world above the gray fog?

Would it cause a terrifying chain effect?

Klein still felt traces of the fear after his experimentation with the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem. In the end, he followed his intent and planned to divine above the gray fog before deciding whether he should make the attempt or not.

He contemplated and asked out of interest, "Madam, if one were to strictly practice the 'acting method,' how long does it take to go from Sequence 8 to Sequence 7, and how long from Sequence 7 to Sequence 6?"

"According to the information that I've read, it varies from three months to two years for Sequence 8 to Sequence 7. It depends on whether you can grasp the core spirit and corresponding principle during the 'acting' process. From Sequence 7 to Sequence 6, it varies from half a year to three years; likewise for Sequence 6 to Sequence 5. As for Sequence 5 to Sequence 4, three to twenty years..." Daly described roughly.

Klein suddenly smiled.

"So Madam, are you already at Sequence 6?"

He heard from Dunn that Daly used a year's time from Sequence 9 Corpse Collector to Sequence 8 Gravedigger. Then, from Gravedigger to Sequence 7 Spirit Medium, she used another year. She had been a Beyonder for five years. In other words, Daly was at the Spirit Medium stage for about three years.

"Yes, that's the reason why I was transferred to Backlund diocese," the creepy translucent face answered frankly. "My current occupation is a Spirit Guide. However, I prefer the name Spirit Medium. Alright, this little guy is getting tired. I have to go. Under such circumstances, I won't be saying 'may the Goddess bless you.'"

"Sweet dreams." Klein pressed his chest, smiled, and bowed.

"No, there won't be any sweet dreams tonight. I have to rush back to Backlund. This isn't a happy experience, it's like having a relationship with someone you don't like..." Daly's voice grew softer, and the translucent face with no eyes or nose slowly shrank back into the wall without leaving behind any traces.

The gas lamp light suddenly became bright and the gloominess vanished into thin air.

Klein, who had his Spirit Vision activated the entire time, watched the changes in a daze. It took him a while to snap back to reality.

"Spirit Medium—no, Spirit Guide is very impressive. It can actually conjure a 'messenger.' I wonder what's the specialty of my Sequence 7 and Sequence 6?" he muttered to himself. Then, he quickly dispelled the spiritual wall, switched off the gas lamp in his bedroom, and silently lay down in the darkness.

He didn't plan to head to the world above the gray fog that night, just in case Daly suddenly returned and said Dunn Smith's classic words, "Oh yeah, I forgot one thing."

When that happens, I wouldn't even be able to silence her with death!

...

On the second day, Klein arrived at the Blackthorn Security Company three minutes early.

"Good morning, Klein. The new clerk is here!" Rozanne greeted with a splendid smile.

Klein felt sincerely happy for her.

“Congratulations, Rozanne. The Goddess heard your prayers.”

“My skin shall be back to perfect condition!” Rozanne nodded, her eyes beaming with joy.

After they chatted for a while, Klein walked through the partition and knocked on the door to the Captain’s office.

“Please come in.” Dunn’s mellow voice sounded.

Klein pushed open the door to enter. He saw his Captain sit up instinctively as his gray eyes turned dark. It was as though he was prepared for trouble.

Ahem. Klein cleared his throat, set aside his hat and cane, then sat down. “Captain, I have something that I’d like to report.” “What is it?” Dunn asked in a deep voice, his arms crossed.

Klein looked at the serious Dunn Smith and smiled suddenly.

"Captain, I understood something yesterday."

"And what is that?" Dunn repeated the question in a serious tone. He leaned back and unfolded his crossed arms.

Klein recalled the script that he had prepared.

"As I was concluding my past experiences, I realized that the names of Sequence potions encompass a whole set of principles that can help us gain control over them, a set of principles that allow us to avoid the negative impacts. When we're doing things according to these set of principles, we seem to become a member of the corresponding job.

"Similarly, these sets of principles are hidden. They aren't made known to you directly. All we can do is make conclusions from the corresponding job bit by bit, then adjust our understanding based on the different feedback we receive.

"Thus, when I became a real Seer at the Divination Club and obtained my set of principles for the Seer, the auditory and visual illusions that plagued me just vanished.

"That is what I understood."

After finishing his narration, Klein heaved a sigh to himself. He said everything he needed to say, other than explicitly mentioning the term 'acting.'

Sigh, let's hope that the Captain doesn't tell the Church that I've already developed such ideas when he is asked. That would place much more attention on me... There's also the factor of the relationship between the Seer pathway and the Antigonus family. That might cause trouble eventually. But the Captain has also experienced all kinds of situations, and he's an experienced and smart person. Once he understands the "acting method," he'll definitely notice that the Church is hiding relevant information. He'll know what he should say and what he shouldn't... Klein had many complicated thoughts.

But he quickly made a decision and had a plan.

If the Captain was still unable to understand the "acting method" or sense of the cover-up by the Church, then I'll tell him straight up before submitting the special application!

Yes, I'll probe him first and determine what he knows...

Dunn listened to Klein's description in silence, his gray eyes becoming even deeper.

He was silent for nearly twenty seconds as he rubbed his temples before he picked up his pipe and took a whiff.

After sniffing it, he took out a matchbox, seemingly forgetting about the rules of the Nighthawks.

The white smoke billowed into the air as Dunn closed his eyes, seemingly appreciating the smell of tobacco.

After a while, he opened his eyes and smiled at Klein.

"I'm sorry, I forgot that you don't smoke."

"Smoking is bad for your health," Klein answered in all seriousness.

Dunn thought with his pipe in his hand.

"I seem to have understood something too."

No Captain, you don't understand anything! Just don't loiter in my dreams too often! Klein didn't speak and instead, gave a friendly smile.

“Perhaps it won’t be too long before you submit the special application to me...” Dunn said to Klein, half-jokingly as he took a deep puff of the mint and tobacco.

Can I submit it tomorrow? Klein replied inwardly. He took out his pocket watch and looked at the time.

“Captain, I have be at Old Neil’s. Today’s mysticism lessons are starting soon.”

“Alright.” Dunn watched Klein leave, his pipe still in his hand.

After closing the door to the Captain’s office, Klein made his way towards the steps leading to the basement in high spirits. He saw two strangers, a male and a female, when he walked past the clerk’s office.

The new clerks... Klein’s mind wondered before he added inwardly, *In another two days, definitely within this week, I’ll submit my application to Captain!*

Then I’ll pass a series of inspections and become a Sequence 8 Clown!

...

Along the silent underground passage, Klein turned to the armory and pushed the guard room door open.

“What happened to you?” Klein had a shock when he saw Old

Neil.

Old Neil looked dispirited, his face was pale. He yawned constantly as he said, “I’ve been a little constipated lately. I tried ritualistic magic that can solve such problems last night. In the end... I didn’t sleep well the entire night. I had to head to the bathroom multiple times, and in the end, and I nearly fell asleep on the toilet bowl.”

Well, the problem of constipation has been solved... Klein nearly laughed, seeing that it wasn’t a serious problem.

But he controlled himself. He asked, “Are you feeling better now?”

At the same time, his concern made him tap his left molar twice. He used his Spirit Vision to observe the aura of Old Neil’s health.

There are some darkness and impurities in the digestive system’s yellow and the kidney’s orange colors, but it’s nothing too serious and is within an acceptable range... Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

“I’m fine now. I got some medicine for the diarrhea from Frye.” Old Neil yawned like a drug addict. “Self-study for today’s supernatural lesson. There’s only two or three days left of content anyway.”

“Alright,” Klein responded politely. “I could help you guard the armory and study here. How about you go rest in the break room?”

Old Neil immediately straightened his back, his eyes glimmering as he answered, “Lad, you surely are the kindest Nighthawk, second to Frye!

“I’ll hand the armory over to you!”

He picked up the cushion he had placed on his knees and rushed out of the guard room like a typhoon, leaving Klein the only person there, dazed.

...

The Blackthorn Security Company accepted an extra mission in the morning. The task involved escorting a rich merchant to the harbor for a deal. Leonard and Kenley completed it easily, earning themselves some extra pay, much to the envy of Klein.

He went about his day, learning about mysticism, practicing his shooting, and getting tortured by Instructor Gawain who seemed to have been agitated by something.

Huff, huff... Klein gasped for air. He only regained the ability to take a shower and change after quite some time.

He continued toiling after leaving Gawain's house. He spent two soli on a carriage and investigated the other ten houses with red chimneys.

Klein's expression became very grave when the last house with the red chimney left his field of vision.

The house with the red chimney that I saw in my divination isn't in the list of houses with a recent change in tenants... If that's the case, this has just become troublesome. I wonder how much time I would need to investigate about 1600 houses... Sigh. I can't ask for any help to do something like this. After all, only I would have the sense of familiarity from my spirituality when I see the target...

Don't be discouraged, don't give up. I'll continue the investigation whenever I have free time. I'll try to complete it within three months, no—two months! Who knows, the target might be found in tomorrow's investigation!

And, I'll organize the material when I get back and plan a route according to the distance of the sectors!

Klein motivated himself, banishing his feelings of depression.

Now that he had made a decision, he planned to instruct the driver to turn toward Daffodil Street. However, he suddenly realized that he was somewhere close to where Mr. Azik stayed.

Before Mr. Azik went for his holiday, he did write to tell me that he would be back sometime this week, but he didn't specify the exact date. Since it's on the way, I'll leave a note for him. Also, I rented this carriage for an hour with two soli, and the time's almost up anyway. I'll just stop at Mr. Azik's house, then take a public carriage back... Klein quickly made a decision.

Four minutes later, he alighted from the carriage and arrived outside Mr. Azik's house.

The houses here were obviously of higher quality than those at Daffodil Street, but not as good as those on Howes Street. There was a patch of grass in front of the house, and a small garden in the back.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

Klein pulled on the rope outside the door and sounded the bell within the house.

A few moments later, he heard footsteps from inside before the door swung open.

Azik's mild facial features and bronze skin appeared before Klein. Since he was at home, he was only dressed in a simple white shirt, a brown vest, and matching pants.

"Klein? I was just about to write to you," Azik greeted enthusiastically. "I just arrived home last night."

Klein stared at the small mole near Azik's right ear.

"Mr. Azik, I found a clue to your past."

"Really?" Azik instantly became excited. The sadness he had in his eyes dulled.

"Let's talk inside." Klein looked around.

Azik quickly nodded. He moved to the side and allowed Klein entry.

He locked the door and guided Klein to the living room on the first floor. They sat on the soft sofa.

"What clues did you find?" he asked impatiently.

Having not expected to meet Mr. Azik today, Klein organized his words.

"I received a mission recently and had to deal with a wraith in Lamud Town."

“Lamud...” Azik repeated the term softly, his eyebrows creasing.

Klein observed his expression and slowed down his tone.

“In the process of dealing with the wraith, we discovered something and thus conducted an investigation within the town...

“A resident of the town was in possession of a portrait of the first Baron Lamud which he tried to sell me. I asked to view the portrait out of curiosity and discovered that the person drawn had facial features that resembled yours, other than the hair. He even had the same mole near the ear, similar position, similar size.

“Under my interrogation, the man told me that the portrait was about forty years old, but the person in the portrait definitely came from the abandoned castle. It was a replica of the ancient portrait excavated from the castle.

“You should know that people like us with unique abilities can more or less tell if somebody is lying. This told me that the man wasn’t lying.”

Azik leaned forward as he listened to Klein. He crossed his arms and remained silent for a while.

Five minutes later, he exhaled.

“Your description didn’t make me recall anything. Perhaps, I should visit the abandoned castle myself. Can you take me there?”

“That would be my honor,” Klein replied. “But I have to head home first. I don’t want my siblings to worry.”

“No problem.” Azik stood up.

2 Daffodil Street. Klein nodded at Azik and briskly walked to the door of his house, fished out his keys, and opened the door.

Melissa was already home, so she heard the click of the door lock and quickly came out of the kitchen and into the living room.

Upon seeing Klein, she said with eyes beaming with joy, "I bought groceries. There's chicken, potatoes, onions, fish, turnips, and peas. I even bought a small jar of honey."

Sis, are you also getting used to the occasional luxury? Klein chuckled.

"You'll have to prepare dinner tonight. Count me out for I'll be out of town. I might not return until dawn. Yea, I'm doing a favor for Mr. Azik, a teacher from the Khoy University's Department of History."

As he spoke, he turned sideways and pointed at the carriage that was waiting outside.

Melissa's lips opened and closed twice, before she pursed them and said, "Alright."

Klein bade his sister farewell and left. He got into the rented carriage that Azik had hired and traveled two hours and forty minutes to Lamud Town.

It was almost nine at that point. The sky was dark, and they could only rely on the crimson moonlight and the twinkling starlight that penetrated the clouds to illuminate the areas without street lamps.

After he instructed the driver to wait in town, Klein led Azik towards the ancient abandoned castle.

As they walked, he realized that Azik was walking faster, to the point of him having to break out into a small jog to keep up. In the end, it was Azik who led the way.

Klein wanted to say something initially, but cleverly swallowed his words when he saw Azik's solemn expression and tightly pursed lips.

With such speed, they quickly arrived at the ancient castle.

The castle which was almost a wreckage extended itself in all four directions while its spire looked desolate, wild, eerie, and dark.

Azik looked at the ancient castle and slowed down his footsteps.

He stopped there and his gaze looked profound but lost, as though he was hovering between dreams and reality.

Suddenly, he groaned in pain, lifting his hand to pinch his forehead while his muscles looked distorted with agony.

"Mr. Azik, are you okay?" Klein asked carefully as he activated his Spirit Vision.

When they were onboard the hired carriage, making their way from Daffodil Street to Lamud Town, he had done a quick divination by flipping a coin to see if there would be any danger on their trip.

But he believed that divination wasn't all-powerful, and he kept his guard up to prevent any misinterpretation on his part. Plus, Azik was quite mysterious. No one knew about his past, and it was uncertain how he would respond if he were to be stimulated by an encounter with his past. Caution and worry had accompanied Klein throughout the trip.

Azik didn't reply immediately but took another two steps forward with a pained expression. He relaxed the hand that was holding his forehead. He then pointed forward with a dreamy tone.

"I've seen this ancient castle before in my dream.

"Back then, it was still complete with a robust outer wall and a high spire.

“I remember that there was a stable there, a water well there, and a barracks there. Over there was a garden that was used to plant potatoes and sweet potatoes...

“I remember there was a training field. My child, he was a boy. He was only about seven or eight years old, but he enjoyed running around while dragging a broadsword that was taller than him. He said that he wanted to become a knight when he grows up...

“My wife always complained about it being too gloomy in the castle. She liked the sunlight, the warmth...”

...

Klein looked at the color of his energy field, and what the man said made his scalp tingle. He was also slightly touched, as though he was experiencing a paranormal story himself.

The ancient castle is really related to Mr. Azik... Could he really be the first generation Baron Lamud, a transcendental creature that has lived for fourteen hundred years? Is he a human or an evil spirit? No way, there are no such things as evil spirits running around under broad daylight and getting involved with the Nighthawks... Klein couldn’t help with his thoughts and allowed them to clash against each other to ignite more ideas.

Just then, Azik stopped muttering and took huge strides through the main gate.

He walked all the way into the castle without Klein’s guidance. He found the hidden gear with obvious familiarity and opened the secret door to enter the basement.

Gripping his cane tightly, Klein followed behind Azik. They walked down along the stairs and returned to the place where there was a coffin.

Unlike the previous time, the coffin was closed and the warm and pure feeling was gone.

The coffin is closed... It must’ve been Frye. It’s his work ethic as a Corpse Collector... Klein nodded thoughtfully and watched the conflicted Azik walk in front of the coffin with his Spirit Vision.

Azik extended his hands to push the coffin lid until there was a gap.

He gazed at the skeleton without a skull for a long time, and he suddenly wailed in pain and sorrow.

Azik lurched backwards with heavy footsteps. He staggered and fell against the wall before Klein managed to respond.

He covered his face with his hands and sat there dispirited. The surroundings suddenly became even darker.

Klein quickened his pace and extended his hands, but he retracted them again, not daring to disturb the man.

Just then, his spiritual perception told him that the current Mr. Azik was very scary, so scary that the basement grew gloomy and terrifying.

Klein slowly moved closer to the stairs.

He trusted Mr. Azik’s character, but he was afraid that the man would lose control.

In such an uneasy situation, he waited for a few more minutes. Then, he finally saw Azik lower his hands and stand up slowly.

Mr. Azik seems to have changed... This is what my spiritual perception tell me... But in my Spirit Vision, his aura colors don’t have any obvious changes. His emotions are in low spirits, depressed and pained as before... Klein made a quick judgment and felt that Azik had become gloomier and more imposing.

“I recalled something, but it’s very minor.” Azik spoke with an emotionless tone.

Then, he looked around and said, “I sense the power that made your fate disharmonious.”

“Huh?” Klein was stunned. Pleasantly surprised, he asked in reply, “Can you trace the source?”

The person behind the scene who stayed in the red chimney house created coincidences in secret and came to Lamud’s ancient castle to take away the black armored knight’s head?

What is he trying to do? What is his true intention?

“It’s been too long, but, I’d like to try.” There seemed to be a volcano that was close to erupting within Azik’s deep voice.

“How?” Klein asked curiously.

Azik walked before the coffin and gazed upon the skeleton inside it.

“He took my child’s skull. I want to find him through a blood connection.”

Your child? Mr. Azik, are you sure the black armored knight is your child? So you really are an antique... You really lost your memory after such a long time? This is the price you have to pay in order to obtain such longevity? Klein took a silent breath, feeling the odd sensation of interacting with a legendary creature.

Then, Azik extended his right hand and suddenly cut his index finger with his thumbnail.

A drop of fresh red blood accurately dripped onto the white skeleton.

It quickly seeped into the skeleton, and the entire skeleton suddenly turned blood-red.

Wah! Wah! Wah! Klein suddenly heard the sound of a baby crying and felt that there was someone staring at him from behind.

He drew his revolver and pointed behind him before turning around slowly. However, there was nothing in sight. Nothing existed behind him.

Even the stairway that connected to the ground floor was gone!

Wah! Wah!

The sound of a baby crying drilled into Klein’s ears, and when he looked towards the coffin again, he was shocked to see that there were many shapeless and distorted faces rising amidst billowing black fog. Then, they manifested a strange door.

Creak!

The illusory door opened and palish-white arms extended out, one after another, but they vanished into the black fog before Azik.

Through the crack that the door opened, Klein saw a white skull. It was thrown underneath a brown tree and reduced to powder as a result of the elements.

Creak!

Countless palish-white arms were sliced off by the door that suddenly slammed shut as they fell onto the ground.

Then, Klein heard a long sigh, Mr. Azik’s heavy sigh, a sigh that seemed to have a rich history behind it.

Along with the sigh, the black fog dispersed and the sound of a baby crying ceased. Everything returned to its original state, except for the accentuated chill.

Klein clenched his chattering teeth and looked into the coffin. He saw that the red skeleton had returned to its original, crystalclear white.

“I’m sorry. I couldn’t find him...” Azik said in a deep voice, his back to Klein.

At the same time, he closed the coffin.

“It’s not surprising that we couldn’t find him. It would’ve been a surprise if we could,” Klein comforted him.

Anyway, I’ve been disappointed many times regarding this matter... he added in his head.

Azik took another glance at the coffin before him. He turned around slowly and said, “I’ll continue investigating and I hope that I can have your assistance.”

“No problem. This is exactly what I wanted to do.” Klein held back his urge to tell Azik about the red chimney.

Because it was useless to bring it up. He could only rely on himself to confirm his target.

However, that solved one of his major problems, which was how he should involve the Nighthawks after he found the red chimney house. He didn’t believe that he could take out such a mysterious and scary puppet master alone.

Now, he could ask for Mr. Azik’s help!

Azik widened his mouth, but didn’t say anything in the end. All he did was sigh and walk towards the stairway quietly.

After leaving the basement and closing the secret door, the two of them walked along the road covered with weeds and brambles. Neither one of them spoke as they walked back from the abandoned ancient castle.

In the dark night, Azik suddenly said, “Until this matter is resolved, I will quit my job and leave Tingen, to look for my lost past.”

“Mr. Azik, did you find out what happened to you?” Klein asked, having failed to hide his curiosity.

The chirping of insects and the hooting of owls reverberated along the path back to the small town. Azik looked ahead and said after a few seconds of silence, "Even though I'm not entirely sure what happened to me, I do have a rough idea.

"Perhaps—perhaps I'm someone who has lived for a very, very long time."

Mr. Azik, you have to seriously consider if you still fit the definition of "someone"... Klein thought to himself, but he didn't dare to say it out loud.

"This wilderness, this silence, often makes one weak...

"I should've paid some sort of price in exchange for this long life. I've lived since the end of the Fourth Epoch, like a wandering spirit across the continent..." Azik's voice deepened, as if he was trying to suppress his emotions. "I don't remember the past. I've forgotten about the people and things that I've sworn to remember..."

Klein poked at the weeds in front of him and said, in thought, "Mr. Azik, I have a theory regarding your situation." "What theory?" Azik looked to the side.

"I think that there's a cycle to your memory loss. Perhaps you 'die' once every few decades, and your memories of the events before that vanishes. Then, after some time, you wake up from the darkness of your slumber and begin a new phase of life. This way, we can explain why you would have such varied dreams. Those are events that you came across over your several lives," Klein described his theory.

Azik slowed down his pace, as if the darkness had grabbed onto his sleeve. He looked ahead with a turbid look before saying after a while, "That is consistent with the memories that were jolted awake just now."

Memories that were jolted awake? Klein had an idea as he said immediately, "Mr. Azik, you might not have to leave Tingen to search for your lost past. You'll regain your memories slowly!" "Why?"

Azik turned his head in surprise.

Klein smiled and said, "Your memories aren't completely gone. The parts of your memory that jolted awake just now are proof of that.

"Furthermore, do you remember the moment you woke up in Backlund and discovered that you had forgotten all about the past?"

Azik nodded. "That's a nightmare that bothers me till this day."

Klein tapped downwards with his black cane and explained in detail, "Before today, I didn't think that there was a problem with that. But your description just now, together with my own conjecture, makes it feel a little weird. You had a document of identification and enough money when you woke up from your dream. You also appeared in a way that didn't startle anyone... All of that seems like it was arranged for you, allowing you to fit into society with little effort.

"Then, who made the arrangements?

"There is only one answer; the you from the past!

"The past you regained his memories and knew that you would have to usher in a new life. Thus, he prepared everything for you, trying his best to not let you attract suspicion from anyone else."

Azik stopped walking. He looked at the specks of light coming from the town, once again slipped into silence.

“Perhaps the ‘parents’ that I’ve been searching for were the past me all along...” He sighed, admitting that Klein’s deduction was very plausible.

“Thus, you don’t need to do anything. All you have to do is patiently wait for your memories to come back to you,” Klein concluded and consoled Mr. Azik.

Azik subconsciously waved his cane before he turned still, like a sculpture carved out of marble.

After a long time, he looked into the distance and answered, “Perhaps—perhaps I’ll only fully regain my memory when this life is nearing its end. I don’t want to wait that long. I want to have plenty of time to understand and free myself from this destiny. So I have to be more proactive in searching for my past, to trigger my memories a little at a time. I have to get my memories back before the time you hypothesized. Waiting would only make me repeat the cycle.”

“Indeed that’s the choice worth looking forward to the most.” Klein didn’t advise against it. Instead, he asked, “Mr. Azik, may I ask for your help in something trivial, other than finding the criminal that took the skull of your child and made my fate disharmonious?”

Azik nodded slightly.

“What do you need me to do?”

Klein organized his words and said, “I hope that you can head to a town between two and five hours away from Tingen by carriage next week, or the week after. I need you to cause a paranormal incident, something that wouldn’t harm anyone. Judging from how you tried to search for the criminal using your bloodline’s connection, I would think that you are fairly adept in the field of dead souls.”

“No problem,” Azik promised without any hesitation. He didn’t ask Klein why he wanted him to do something like that.

At the same time, he had tacitly confirmed Klein’s conjecture about his powers.

“Thank you. This is very important to me. Also, you can only choose a follower of the Evernight Goddess when you are picking a target. Also, don’t leave any clues behind,” Klein instructed.

Only through this method could the incident be relayed to the Tingen Nighthawks. Only then could he join the team on the mission and suggest using Sealed Artifact 3-0782. Only then could he extract the divine blood from the Sealed Artifact to create Flaring Sun Charms!

That was the most powerful item he could obtain at the moment.

Under the assumption that the culprit living in the house with the red chimney hasn’t left Tingen, and that Klein was going to continue investigating, he had to try his best to become more powerful!

Yes, according to the information I obtained, stealing a little of its powers wouldn’t damage 3-0782. At the very most, the expiry of its purifying powers will be slightly reduced... This is for the safety and stability of Tingen City! Klein inwardly tried to justify his actions.

Azik didn’t care about his motives. He nodded.

“I will tell you the name of the town and the estimated time beforehand so you can prepare yourself.”

Phew... Klein heaved a sigh of relief. He felt that this trip to Lamud Town wasn’t a wasted trip.

Even though they only managed to peel back the outermost layer of the mysteries surrounding Mr. Azik and had much more to find out, he had at least managed to gain the friendship of Azik, a reliable ally in his search for the culprit behind the scenes!

...

At half past eleven that night, Klein returned to 2 Daffodil Street, hungry and tired.

“To think that Mr. Azik didn’t treat me to dinner... Sigh. He wouldn’t have been in the mood to enjoy dinner anyway,” Klein muttered as he opened the door.

The house wasn't as dark as he had anticipated. An elegant gas lamp was silently emitting its light, warmly illuminating the living room. Benson was sitting alone on the sofa with a book, draped under a bright "coat."

When he saw the door open, Benson was just about to speak when he yawned. He had no choice but to cover his mouth.

Klein closed the door and smiled, quipping, "I went to Lamud Town with Mr. Azik. There's an abandoned castle with a long history over there."

Benson was immediately enlightened as he laughed.

"A moonless night, a castle abandoned for a millennia, a cold and creepy environment, coupled with a two-man archaeological team... This is the perfect recipe for the opening of a paranormal novel."

What happened today could be classified as paranormal... Klein suddenly recalled the strange door Mr. Azik conjured and the cries of a baby. He said, a lingering fear still gripping onto him, "It did feel a bit like that back there."

Benson yawned again before shutting his book and said, "I need sleep. Ever since I began studying and reading classical literature, the quality of my sleep has become especially good."

Klein laughed to himself, suddenly recalling something Miss Justice had mentioned. He said, lowering his voice, "Benson, you know that my company has connections with the Awwa County Police. I recently heard news from Backlund that the King, Prime Minister, other ministers and Members of Parliament are all sick of an inefficient government. They want to push for a reform and select talents to take on positions in the government based on an open examination, just like the entrance examinations of universities."

Benson was at a loss at first, then his eyes sparkled as he asked, "An open examination?"

"Yes. As long as you pass the examination, you could become a civil servant in one of the branches of the government. My guess, yes—my guess is that the contents of the examination will be modeled after the entrance exams of the universities: literature, the classics, math and logic, as well as a basic understanding of the law..." Klein used this opportunity to include his opinion. He continued, "Benson, this must be kept confidential, and don't put too much hope on this. No one knows if this will be passed by the House of Lords and House of Commons or not."

"I'll keep it in mind. I understand that all I need to do is study hard." Benson smiled, then said, "I'd study hard whether this change happens or not. I'll try my best to free myself from my current circumstance and find a better job. Learning—that's the greatest difference between a human and a curly-haired baboon."

No, research suggests that baboons have decent IQ levels, and a certain level of learning abilities... Klein lampooned silently and looked on as Benson headed to the second floor.

After that, he smiled and rubbed his stomach as he walked toward the kitchen.

He found the leftovers and the chicken Benson and Melissa left him especially. Klein relaxed as he started preparing his late dinner.

It was deep into the night now, and most people had already gone to bed. He was the only one still awake, breathing in the cool air with mixed aromas and making slight movements.

Everything was peaceful and serene.

...

After he was satiated, he washed the dishes and took a bath. Finally, Klein returned to his room and locked the door.

He yawned but kept himself awake. He took out the silver dagger used for rituals and sealed the room with a wall of spirituality.

He wanted to divine above the gray fog whether summoning “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era” was dangerous or not!

The gray fog filled the air in its eternally unchanging manner as the illusory crimson stars hung around him at varying distances. Klein sat inside the lofty palace that looked like the home of a giant as he looked at the familiar sight before him.

After a few seconds, he looked away and made a yellowishbrown goatskin appear before him. Then, he lifted a pen to write his amended incantation for the summoning ritual.

“Light a candle to represent myself.

“Use a spiritual wall to create a holy environment.

“Drip a drop of Full Moon Essence Oil in the flame, Chamomile Pure Dew, Slumber Flower Powder, and other ingredients. (Note: There’s no need to be too particular in this step because it’s summoning oneself).

“Recite the incantation below.

“I! (In ancient Hermes, Jotun, Dragonese, or Elfish. It must be a deep shout)

“I summon in my name (Hermes),

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.”

...

After scrutinizing it three times, Klein wrote a divination statement at the bottom:

“There will be danger if the ritual above is carried out outside of this world.”

Phew. He let out a breath, put down the pen, took out the silver chain in his sleeve, and held it with his left hand.

The topaz pendant hung above the goatskin steadily, only a slight distance above the divination statement. He reined in his thoughts and entered a Cogitation state.

“There will be danger if the ritual above is carried out outside of this world.

“There will be danger if the ritual above is carried out outside of this world.”

...

After reciting the statement seven times, Klein opened his eyes which were almost all black and looked at the topaz pendant which was spinning counterclockwise.

That meant a negative outcome: there would be no danger!

“I can give it a try then.” Klein made the items before him disappear. He then extended his spirituality to wrap around himself and simulated the sensation of falling.

When he returned to his bedroom, due to the fact that he had sealed the entire room with a spiritual wall, Klein immediately cleared his desk and put out a mint-scented candle right in the middle.

He pressed slightly on the candle wick, rubbing it with spirituality to cause friction and ignite the candle.

Under the flickering dim light, Klein dripped the corresponding essential oils, extracts, and herb powder onto the flame.

A soothing fragrance suddenly filled the air, and the room alternated between brightness and darkness.

Taking two steps back, Klein looked at the candle that represented himself and shouted in Jotun, “I!”

Then, he switched to Hermes, “I summon in my name:

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.”

Just as he finished speaking, he sensed the wavering candlelight suddenly dance vigorously and produce a vortex with the surrounding fragrance. It absorbed his spirituality at an insane rate.

“Slumber flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation...” Klein endured the discomfort brought about from having his spirituality drained as he finished reciting the incantation.

Then, he saw the candlelight stop wavering. It was tainted with a gray luster, which extended to about the size of a palm.

“I didn’t summon anything... Oh right, perhaps I’ll need to respond to it above the gray fog? It’s really quite troublesome to summon myself...” Klein muttered, pinching his aching forehead.

He calmed himself down, then took four steps counterclockwise before arriving above the gray fog again. He saw that there was a rippling light above the seat of honor at the ancient table.

It stemmed from the strange symbol at the back of the corresponding chair. The strange symbol that was made up of a Pupil-less Eye, a symbol representing concealment, and Contorted Lines that represented change.

All Klein did was extend his hand to reach for it when he immediately heard, “I! I summon in my name, The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.” Then, he saw surging spirituality combined with a rippling light that formed into an illusory yet shapeless door.

The door shook as though it wanted to be opened. Klein immediately felt inspired and strongly willed for it to be pushed open.

Almost instantly, the boundless fog and lofty palace was drawn forward. There were a few barely noticeable ripples.

The ripples surged towards the illusory yet shapeless door.

But, no matter how much Klein pushed it, the door couldn’t be pushed open. Every movement resulted in dead silence.

“The Door of Summoning has yet to take shape?” Klein reined in his will and creased his eyebrows when he analyzed the reason why he had failed.

He had casually named the door “the Door of Summoning.”

“Hmm, I’m lacking spirituality, so I can’t form a complete Door of Summoning. When I advance to Sequence 8 Clown and pass through the initial dangerous stage, I can give it another try. Maybe it won’t be a problem by then...” Klein nodded lightly and roughly understood what had happened.

This experiment gave him a confidence boost, he felt heartened as this was the first time that he received some sort of response from the mysterious space above the gray fog*—*other than the incident where he divined about Eternal Blazing Sun!

There will come a day when I’ll understand all the secrets here! Klein excitedly declared in his heart. He then made a rapid descent into the boundless fog after he wrapped himself up with spirituality.

...

Klein quickly blew out the candle after he returned to his bedroom. He ended the ritual and cleaned up his study desk before he removed the spiritual wall.

A gust of wind suddenly blew as he yawned. He collapsed into the bed, covered himself with a blanket and quickly fell asleep.

In the hazy dream that followed, Klein woke up abruptly and realized that he was sitting in the living room of his home and was holding the Tingen City Honest Paper.

...Don't tell me Captain is here again? He was stunned at first as he looked outside the oriel window, finding humor in his exasperation.

With a creak, the door opened. Dunn walked in slowly, wearing his black trench coat that went beyond his knees and held a cane and pipe.

He was still wearing his black top hat, and underneath it were his profound gray eyes.

Dunn came to the living room and sat on the single seat sofa. He leisurely crossed his right leg over his left.

He put aside his cane, took off his hat, and leaned backwards. He sat there quietly and looked at Klein as though he was thinking.

Captain, what are you trying to do today... Klein was dumbfounded.

In order to not expose that he knew that it was a dream, he pretended to not be affected by it and continued to read the newspaper.

One minute, two minutes, five minutes. He lifted his head to look at Dunn who sat opposite him. He found out that the Captain was still sitting there quietly and was looking at him in deep thought.

Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes. Klein flipped through the newspaper back and forth multiple times, looking at Dunn from the corner of his eyes, and noticed that the man was still looking at him quietly in deep thought.

Captain, you're making me very uncomfortable... Klein couldn't sit in peace. He folded the newspaper and put it aside. He nodded and smiled at Dunn. Then, he went to the kitchen to get a piece of cloth and started wiping the dining table and coffee table.

Captain, look, my dream is so simple, so ordinary, so boring. There's nothing worth observing. Hurry up and leave! Why don't you pretend to be a ghost and I'll pretend to be frightened, then you can complete your achievement as a Nightmare! He prayed in silence and lifted his head, but all he saw was Dunn's deep gray eyes that were still in deep thought.

Under such a quiet and constant gaze, Klein wiped all the furniture and cleaned his room. He was so exhausted in his dream.

What wore him out the most was Dunn Smith, who was watching him quietly in deep thought.

Klein had no idea how much time had passed while he made himself busy until he finally saw his Captain uncross his legs and stand up. Then, he took his cane, put on his hat, and walked through the door.

Klein held his breath and watched Dunn leave his house.

He couldn't help but lift his right hand to wave goodbye.

Phew... When everything returned to normal, Klein let out a breath of relief.

That really was such a nightmare! He thought to himself, too preoccupied for tears.

...

Backlund, West Backlund, Philip's Department Store.

Philip's was one of the top-end department stores in the Loen Kingdom. It only opened to nobles and wealthy people who were qualified to be members.

There was always luxurious carriages parked outside with different emblems printed on them. Not only was it a safe place for shopping, it also became a popular social venue due to the strict restriction on members.

Audrey brought her maidservant, Annie, and her golden retriever, Susie. Under the ushering of an eagerly attentive attendant, she got off the carriage and walked through the entrance.

Along the way, she saw daughters of viscounts, countesses, or maidens with parents of high social status.

She maintained her elegance and greeted them all gracefully. She communicated with different nobles on different topics. For instance, when she faced a particular countess, she would compliment the fittings of the countess's dress and when she greeted a particular baroness, she would praise the outstanding performance of the baroness's husband in the House of Lords.

Audrey hadn't been good at that previously; she was too stubborn and too arrogant. But now, she didn't even need to put in much effort to respond perfectly.

In a Spectator's eyes, most of the emotions and thoughts of the female nobles were written on their faces.

Arriving at the second floor, Audrey turned into a shop that sold ready-made dresses.

The attendant in the shop was a petite maiden. She wore a black and white dress and had shoulder-length blond hair. She was the Arbiter, Xio Derecha.

Audrey gave Susie a look without changing her facial expression. The dog understood what her owner meant immediately and ran to another counter.

Maidservant Annie went after Susie to try to drag her back.

Well done! Audrey complimented inwardly and walked next to Xio Derecha, pretending to look at the variety of dresses.

"...Why did you arrange to meet me here for?" Xio inquired with a whisper while she loudly introduced the dresses.

Her voice was tender, just like a child's.

"Where's the original attendant?" Audrey asked in reply instead of answering her.

Xio looked around and said, "I convinced her. She was happy to rest for the morning."

Audrey looked at the different styled dresses while she took out a piece of neatly folded paper from her lamb leather handbag and secretly passed it to Xio.

"Vice Admiral Hurricane, Qilangos, has snuck into Backlund. This is his portrait. I hope you can find him for me. Oh, and don't alert him."

Xio received the piece of paper and unfolded it to take a quick glance. She saw that it was a lifelike portrait of a man in his thirties that had a unique broad chin.

I was once constantly praised by my art teacher... Audrey stole a glance at Xio and lifted her head.

She added, "The Kingdom offers a reward of ten thousand pounds for Qilangos. If he were to be arrested, even the person that only provided clues would definitely be awarded with a few hundred pounds."

Just as she finished her sentence, she saw Xio's eyes beam with joy, as she had expected.

A unique wide jaw, his hair is in a bun like an ancient knight's, eyes that look at you with the intent of an icy smile... Xio Derecha was half slumped on the sofa as she scrutinized the portrait that Audrey had handed to her.

In her eyes, the man might as well have been a living, walking pile of money.

After committing the looks of the great pirate Qilangos to her memory, she proceeded to read the description written at the bottom of the page:

"Brown hair, dark green eyes.

"The portrait can only be used as a general reference as the target possesses the ability to transform into another person. It is unknown how long he can maintain the transformation."

The portrait can only be used as a reference... The target possesses the ability to transform into another person... Only as a reference, transform into another person... Then why did I spend so much time memorizing his facial features? Xio wore a dazed look, as if it was the first time she had witnessed the evil intentions the world had for her.

She looked up and saw Fors Wall slumped languidly in a sofa opposite her. She seemed to be muttering to herself, "There's no way to look for this person. We don't know what he looks like. All we know is that he's not from Backlund. There are far too many foreigners who come into Backlund every day."

Fors attempted to sit up, but failed even after three tries.

"I'm only an Apprentice, not an Arbiter..." She pouted as she placed her hand on the armrest of the sofa, successfully pulling herself up into a sitting position.

"Does that lady think that we are prophets?" Fors jested.

Xio was about to answer when she realized that there were still footnotes she hadn't gone through yet.

She recited them out softly, "The suggested ways of searching are as follows:

"1. Qilangos has an evil object with him. It needs to devour the flesh, blood, and soul of a living person every other day. You can consider looking for missing vagrants.

"2. Search for Qilangos's information thoroughly and build a profile of his unique hobbies and behaviors.

"3. A person's facial features might change, but as long as he hasn't received any special training, he will often act like himself, such as the things he prefers to eat, his gait, actions he's used to performing, and many other details." Fors nodded as she listened.

"Miss Audrey isn't the innocent, naive teen that the rumors about her suggest. She has a meticulous heart and a calm sense of observation."

"Is that so?" Xio asked, doubtful. She didn't expect an answer as she changed the topic by suggesting, "I'll be in charge of gathering the information. Can you consolidate that pile of gold pound's, no—that admiral's hobbies and unique traits?"

Fors opened her eyes wide open and shook the steel box containing her cigarettes.

"How can you bear to do this? How can you bear to make a dainty, sensitive author do consolidation, analysis, and deduction?"

Xio shot her good friend a glance as she exuded an air of authority without realizing it.

"There's an interesting paragraph on deduction in your Stormwind Mountain Villa."

Fors pulled her shoulders back and lowered her head. She looked at the coffee table as she said, “Do you know how much of my hair I pulled out, how much sleep I lost, just for that paragraph?”

She quickly lifted her head and looked at Xio Derecha, then lowered her head once again and grumbled, “Life is short. There are too many things that we need to do, why must we waste our time on such uninteresting, menial tasks?”

That’s very reasonable... Xio nearly nodded in agreement. She fought hard to keep her authority as an Arbiter.

“Then do you have any other ways to solve this problem?” She suppressed her voice, making her childlike voice sound deeper.

Fors thought for nearly twenty seconds before looking up suddenly.

“We can hire a professional! After you finish collecting information on Vice Admiral Hurricane, we shall erase the name and hand it over to an excellent detective, then ask him to do the consolidation and deduction. All we have to do is pay a fee!”

Why didn’t I think of that... Xio’s mind went blank. Fors and Xio looked at each other without saying anything.

When the atmosphere became awkward, she cleared her throat.

“We’ll do it according to your suggestion.”

After saying this, she quickly added, “You’ll pay the fee!”

...

Howes Street, Divination Club.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Moretti.” The pretty receptionist Angelica looked at Klein in surprise. “You rarely come on Fridays.”

Exhausted from searching for the house with the red chimney, Klein smiled and said,

“Fate never repeats itself indefinitely. It always brings us some surprises.”

He was in the area, and the time had expired on the carriage he rented; thus, he came for a cup of black tea and some rest.

Furthermore, this would serve as the final layer of the foundations. With the new “experience” at the Divination Club, he would logically mention the application to Dunn Smith.

“Your words are always so philosophical,” Angelica praised.

Klein thought for a moment before saying with deliberation, “I might not come to the Divination Club too often in the future, so you need not recommend me to others anymore.”

He had already digested his potion, so he had to advance towards a new goal!

“Why?” Angelica said in shock and puzzlement. “You’ve already made a name for yourself in the club. Most people know that your divinations are very accurate and miraculous. In fact, we were considering getting you to come in on Sundays as a

lecturer.”

If I was paid one pound for every divination I perform, then I would keep doing this regardless of how tired I was... Besides, I still have to investigate the houses with red chimneys and find the culprit as soon as possible... Klein smiled warmly.

“Madam, do not convince me to stay; this is the arrangement of fate.

“I won’t stop coming to the Divination Club entirely, it’s just that my visits will become less frequent. I’ll still pay the membership fees on time.”

I can get reimbursed for it anyway... I will come down occasionally to monitor the place... Klein added in his heart.

"How regretful. I hope that you will be at the club when I happen to be lost." Angelica sighed.

She realized that this wasn't as surprising as she imagined after the initial shock had passed.

Perhaps such a miraculous seer that still respected fate wasn't someone who could be held back by a club in Tingen... Angelica smiled, as if thinking about something.

"Sibe black tea?"

"Yes." Klein returned a smile.

He spent about twenty minutes in the club, spending the time resting, finishing his black tea before leaving the club. He took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

When he entered, he opened the mailbox out of habit and saw that there was a letter placed inside not too long ago.

Klein opened the letter and noticed that it was from Mr. Azik.

"...I will be heading to Morse Town on Sunday and return on Wednesday."

Most of the citizens in Morse Town are believers of the Goddess... He's heading there on a Sunday, which means that according to the usual level of efficiency, the Nighthawks would only receive the information on Tuesday or Wednesday. I can make it... To think that Mr. Azik would remember my request... I hope that he remembers not to do it personally. Him summoning a spirit and doing something scary would suffice... Klein nodded slightly. He released his spirituality and burned the letter with friction.

He flicked his hand, turning the flames into ashes and allowed them to fall slowly onto the ground.

...

Saturday afternoon. Klein was wearing his black trench coat and hat. He had his cane in his hand as he walked slowly into the Blackthorn Security Company.

After greeting Rozanne, he looked at the partition and noticed that the Captain's office was open. He deliberately spoke louder, "Yesterday. I saw a girl who looked just like you at the Divination Club."

"Really?" Rozanne asked, her interest piqued.

Klein nodded without sincerity. "Yes, in fact, I thought that she was your sister."

"I'm sorry to have to disappoint you, but I have no sisters, not even cousins." Rozanne laughed. "Do you remember her name?"

"No, why would I remember her name?" Klein smiled. "Looking at her was exactly like looking at you."

"Can I take that as a compliment?" Rozanne was a chatty girl who never needed others to start the conversation. She asked on her own accord, "Klein, I would assume that you're earning quite a bit from the Divination Club? As a true Seer, your abilities are far beyond those who take this as a hobby."

We would still be good colleagues if you didn't mention this... Klein coughed.

"A Seer has to be respectful of fate. We cannot use divination to ask for abnormal privileges."

"Are you concluding your own maxim for a Seer?" Rozanne asked out of curiosity.

"Yes," Klein answered frankly.

After a brief chat, Klein said goodbye to Rozanne. He took his hat and walked toward the partition.

Knock! Knock! Knock! He looked at Dunn Smith, who was drinking his coffee, as he knocked on the open door.

“Please come in.” Dunn looked up at Klein and adjusted his posture immediately.

Klein had already probed the Captain over the past two days. He confirmed that Dunn Smith hadn’t mentioned the “acting method” as he was trying it out. It was clear that he was also cautious of the higher-ups of the Church.

Thus he closed the door and sat opposite Dunn. He said with a serious, yet slightly excited expression, “Captain, I believe that I have completely grasped the Seer potion. I wish to submit a special application.”

As he looked into Klein's eyes, Dunn took a deep breath and leaned back. Then, he slowly exhaled as he spoke.

"Are you certain?"

There were minor changes in his facial expression. He seemed to be well prepared for the special application, but he hadn't expected it to be so soon.

Captain, why do you look relieved... Klein didn't conceal his smile as he said, "I'm certain, Captain. When you fully master a potion, you'll feel a very special and magical sensation. You'll have no doubt that you've fully mastered the potion."

"Special, magical feeling..." Dunn muttered those words softly and his eyebrows slowly knitted together.

Huh, the Captain advanced twice without fully digesting the potion? Of course, if he didn't know about the "acting method," it would be difficult to fully digest it. He must've used a prolonged period of time to break it down and was subconsciously "acting" to minimize the risk of losing control... Poor Captain... Klein quietly looked at Dunn Smith, but he didn't speak or say anything further so as to allow Dunn to think carefully.

After almost a minute, Dunn's deep eyes reflected Klein's figure once again. He weighed his words before he said, "Maybe it would be a better option to wait another year."

What the Captain means is that waiting another year would make it less conspicuous. With the example that Madam Daly set for me, the higher-ups wouldn't pay too much attention to me. At most, I would only be put on a list for observation, Klein thought and answered frankly, "At first, I wanted to wait until next year to send in my special application. After all, there are too many things that I need to master. For instance, my combat arts is only at the beginner level.

"But, Captain, don't you think that we've experienced too many coincidences in the last two months? We were chasing after the kidnappers when we came across the Antigonus Notebook in the opposite room. The shipment of Sealed Artifact 2-049 was delayed, but Ray Bieber didn't leave Tingen and tried to digest the power at the harbor. I went to attend a birthday banquet and triggered Hanass Vincent's incident. I went to investigate at the library and ran into a member of the Aurora Order...

"I don't know what these coincidences mean, but I feel insecure. That's why I want to enhance myself in the best possible way."

Klein seized the opportunity to talk about the manipulator behind the scenes. It was something he had planned to include in his schedule—without exposing his uniqueness, he would remind the Nighthawks to make them search for more clues from different angles. What he said earlier would only lead the other Nighthawks to conclude that Klein had a discerning mind and was good at organizing his thoughts.

The moment Klein said the word "but," Dunn's body leaned forward. In the end, he steepled his fingers in front of his mouth.

He fixed his gaze and remained quiet, seemingly thinking about what Klein had said.

After a while, Dunn lifted his head and said in a mellow and deep voice, "Very perceptive... Perhaps there really is something lurking in the dark."

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he instructed, "You can submit the special application."

"Alright." Klein lifted the corner of his lips when he answered.

He got up with a smile and walked towards the door. As expected, he heard a familiar additional remark.

“Hold on,” Dunn called out. He weighed his words and said, “Take note of your choice of words.”

Don’t worry, Captain. I place a far greater importance on this matter than you do! Klein nodded in agreement with a smile.

At first, he thought Dunn would propose that they avoid going through the Holy Cathedral and instead advance to Sequence 8 in secret. Then they could go through the normal procedure after three years. However, after he thought it through, he realized that it was impossible. Regardless of whether it was through a special application or a normal application, the person who was going to advance still had to be investigated by the Holy Cathedral; the only difference was that one method was relatively simple and the other was more complicated.

If he had become a Sequence 8 in secret, then it could put the entire Tingen Nighthawks in trouble.

...

Since Klein was finished with his mysticism lessons, he didn’t go to the basement in a hurry but walked to the clerk’s office next door after leaving the Captain’s office.

He found a man and a woman sitting in the office. The man was in his thirties and the woman was in her twenties; they were the two newly added members.

They were surprised when Klein entered, then they smiled and nodded in greeting. They were curious and in awe of the Beyonders that they worked with.

Klein didn’t chat with them but found an empty desk and began writing a draft for the special application.

As he already had a draft in his head, it only took about ten minutes to complete his initial work.

After reading it a couple of times and amending parts of it, he sat before the Akerson Model 1346 typewriter and started typing his draft onto a document.

Listening to the tapping of the keyboard, the two new clerks exchanged looks and stood up simultaneously. They left the office and went to the reception hall to chat with Rozanne, allowing Klein to have some privacy.

Very careful and fully aware of the need to maintain secrecy... Klein stole a glance at their receding figures as he complimented them.

He focused on his work again and continued tapping on the typewriter.

Just as he was going to complete his special application, Leonard Mitchell came out of the restroom. He looked around while he buttoned his shirt. There was an unrestrained beauty in his messy hair.

“What’s the report you’re writing?” Leonard looked around the clerk’s office as he leaned against the door frame with his right foot tiptoed to balance himself and his hands tucked into his pockets.

His green eyes examined Klein with interest.

Klein typed the last word and the last punctuation mark. He then turned his head and smiled.

“Special application.”

“Special application?” Leonard asked, puzzled.

Klein picked up the paper and skimmed through it quickly. He casually explained, “A special application to advance to Sequence

8.”

Cough! Cough! Cough! Leonard suddenly coughed vigorously. He calmed down and asked,

“You’re already done digesting the potion?”

Digest? Bro, you know quite a bit... Klein held his special application and walked before Leonard. He lifted an eyebrow and said, “Yes.”

Then, he looked into his eyes and added softly with a chuckle, “I remember someone told me once that there are some people who are special, people who can do things that others can’t.

“Such as me.

“Such as you.”

Leonard was suddenly at a loss for words. He could only change his standing posture and take his hands out his pockets to cross them in front of his chest.

He opened his mouth and finally organized his words. He asked in a low voice, “Don’t you think that it’s too risky?”

As he already knew about digesting, he definitely understands that my advancement has no risk of losing control... Hmm, is he referring to the attention from the higher-ups in the Church? Klein explained while in thought, “Leonard, do you remember the first task that we worked on together? We were merely tracking kidnappers, but we realized that the room opposite had clues about the Antigonus family’s notebook...”

He repeated what he mentioned to Dunn once more.

Leonard’s expression grew heavy, and he nodded in agreement slightly.

He muttered to himself and said, “Maybe, I have to hurry up...”

Just as he finished, he suddenly looked at Klein and flashed a smile as he said, “Aren’t you going to share your experience with us? The experience to quickly grasp a potion and avoid the risk of losing control!”

This guy sure can put on a facade quickly... Klein smiled and answered, “I’m more than willing to.”

He was planning to seize the opportunity today to remind his Nighthawks teammates on how to minimize the risk of losing control.

Of course, to maintain his personal safety, he couldn’t say it as straightforwardly as he did to Dunn Smith. At most, he could describe the idea vaguely, in a way that wouldn’t alert anyone who was sent down by the higher-ups.

“Let’s do it now then!” Leonard impatiently dragged Klein to the Nighthawks’ recreation room.

At that very moment, other than Royale who was taking her shift at Chanis Gate, Frye, Kenley, and Seeka Tron were there playing cards.

“Everyone, everyone!” Leonard knocked on the half-closed door and spoke as if he was reciting a poem, “Let me introduce this man next to me, Mr. Klein Moretti, who has fully grasped his potion in a month and a half!”

...This guy is so dramatic... Klein suddenly felt awkward.

“What?” Even Seeka Tron, the author who wasn’t famous and barely sold any books, cocked her head sideways as though she was testing her hearing ability.

“Leonard, don’t joke around. You’re always exaggerating things.” Kenley covered his cards helplessly.

Frye held his cards as he looked at Klein. He kept quiet for a while and said, “Are you sure that you’ve already fully grasped the potion?”

“Yes.” Klein could feel his concern and he nodded confidently. “There was an obvious indication.”

“What? Really?” Kenley shouted a delayed response and stood up.

Leonard chuckled and pointed at the paper in Klein's hands as he said, "This is the special application that he's going to hand in. The special application to advance to Sequence 8!"

"...How did you do it?" Seeka Tron had many questions, but she only voiced the one that concerned her the most after taking a deep breath.

She was normally quiet and elegant, but now she had a burning passion in her eyes that couldn't be suppressed.

Klein found a chair and sat down. He lowered his voice and answered, "I found inspiration from the maxim of the Mystery Pryers."

"Do as you wish, but do no harm?" Leonard supplemented.

"Yes. According to our confidential information, following this maxim gives the Mystery Pryers a lower probability of losing control," Klein explained what he learned from Old Neil. "After that, Madam Daly's example gave me a better understanding of the process."

"Spirit Medium Daly?" Kenley asked in reply, hoping to gain confirmation.

"Yes. Madam Daly has handed in a special application before. She only used two years to become a Spirit Medium from Corpse Collector. She once told Old Neil that she wanted to be a real Spirit Medium," Klein explained in detail. "With the experience I gained in the Divination Club and corresponding feedback that I've received, I gradually concluded my Seer principles. Then I followed it strictly and tried to become a real Seer... When I did so, I realized that the speed at which I grasped the potion became faster."

As they listened to Klein's recount, Frye, Seeka, and the rest fell into deep thought. Even Leonard pretended to be thinking.

"I'm going to hand in my special application." Klein waved the paper in his hands. "If you have any problems, do ask me

privately."

"Alright," Frye replied coldly with a nod.

Klein left the recreation room and knocked on the door to the Captain's office again.

He sat down opposite to Dunn, then took up a pen and ink pad. He signed and stamped his thumbprint.

"Captain, this is my special application." After that, he passed the paper to Dunn with both hands.

Dunn looked through it carefully and put down the application.

"I'll submit it to the Holy Cathedral as soon as possible. You should be prepared to be examined. Perhaps next week or the following week."

"Alright." Klein took a deep breath and nodded seriously.

He stood up, exited the Captain's office, and closed the door behind him.

During the process, he thought about the application that he had sent in. There was a thought that popped up in his head.

I wonder what kind of examination it will be...

CHAPTER 155: URGENT MEETING

After collecting himself, Klein went down to the basement and walked to Chanis Gate. He knocked on the door to the guard room.

Inside, Royale Reideen had already packed her personal belongings. She immediately smoothed her hair and stood up when she saw the person taking over her shift.

After greeting each other with a nod, Klein suddenly said, "I've had some success with grasping my potion and have shared my experiences with Frye and the rest. You can ask them about it."

Royale, who typically didn't have much of an expression, looked at Klein with a little shock. Her lips quivered a little as she said, "Alright."

Madam, let's hope that you can still maintain your calm composure in a while... There are already a bunch of dazed people sitting in the recreation room right now. Klein laughed and made his way behind the table, expertly taking out the tin can which Dunn Smith used to store his Fermo coffee.

After making himself a cup of aromatic coffee, Klein sat down and relaxed. He looked out at the lonely hallway and allowed his thoughts to roam free.

Let's hope that Mr. Azik's mission is successful and that he doesn't leave behind any clues. Well, even if there are clues, I can just pretend to not notice them.

I wonder where the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem is sealed behind Chanis Gate? Since it doesn't possess any living qualities, it only needs a little space...

Come to think of it, I haven't been inside Chanis Gate. I'm not sure what it looks like inside... To be able to keep the weird Sealed Artifacts of varying sizes safe and maintain surveillance, it must be quite special indeed. For example, the ashes of Saint Selena?

...

Many thoughts streaked past Klein's head when he suddenly heard urgent footsteps. He focused and shot a look towards the door.

He saw Old Neil, wearing his classic black robe, appear in the corridor with a black carpet in his hands. He made his way into the guard room and said nothing, but instead observed Klein thoroughly.

"Mr. Neil, did something happen?" Klein let out a dry chuckle and took a sip of his fragrant coffee.

Old Neil sized him up and sighed.

"To think that you would find inspiration from the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and Daly..."

"I have to praise the Goddess. I also have to thank you for your teachings." Klein gave a reply in all seriousness.

Old Neil pulled back a chair and sat down. He said, a little depressed, "How good would it be if it was twenty years ago..."

Klein maintained his silence, for he knew that Old Neil wasn't allowed to consume any more potions because of his age and health, even if he had completely digested the one he had right now.

Under such circumstances, anything he said would've agitated him.

"My earliest thoughts was to quickly gain control of my potion from the maxim of the Mystery Pryer, but regrettably, I wasn't embarking in the right direction. Daly's success did give me some clues, but I was already more than 50 years old back then, and had already given up on my efforts. I subconsciously thought that her success was a result of her genius, and that an average person wouldn't be able to emulate her achievements." Old Neil rubbed his temples as he described his disappointment.

He was silent for a few minutes before he lifted his head. He looked at Klein.

"It sure is regrettable that only now do I understand what I've missed out on at this age."

Old Neil should've had a faint understanding of the "acting method." He immediately understood what happened after I shared my experiences... Klein consoled, "It wouldn't have made too much of a difference. The Church doesn't hold the Sequence 8 corresponding to Mystery Pryer."

"Perhaps the Holy Cathedral does have it... No, if they have it, they would at least tell us its name. It's also possible that the underground market might have it..." Old Neil muttered. He shook his head as he stood up. He laughed and said. "At least I didn't lose control, and I've lived healthily for decades... Praise the Lady."

He drew a crimson moon in front of his chest and left the guard room a little dejected. He had lost his usual shrewd look.

Klein looked at Old Neil's back and suddenly let out a long sigh.

He was even more perplexed as to why the higher-ups of the Church would hide the "acting method."

Klein collected himself after some time, placing his attention on the confidential information of the Nighthawks in front of him.

Ever since he pulled the youth from the City of Silver into the Tarot Club and learned that the City of Silver still used the ancient names for many things, he found it necessary to enhance his knowledge in these areas.

Some time later, he heard another set of footsteps. These footsteps were slow and steady.

At the same time, an image of Dunn Smith wearing a black trench coat flashed past his mind.

My spiritual senses have been elevated after fully digesting the Seer potion... Klein nodded in understanding. He saw the Captain a few seconds later.

"A letter for you." Dunn extended his right arm and flicked his wrist, tossing the letter over to Klein.

Klein lifted his hand and tried to grab the letter, but be it his judgment or reaction, he missed.

Pa!

The letter fell onto the floor, leaving Klein's right hand extended awkwardly in the air.

Under the suddenly silent atmosphere, his right hand first became rigid, then he pulled it back toward his head and pretended to smooth out his hair.

"The light from the gas lamp isn't bright enough," Klein made a perfunctory statement casually. He bent his back and picked up the letter, giving it a cursory glance.

Mr. Hornacis... It's a letter from Daxter Guderian... He nodded in understanding and pulled open a drawer to retrieve a letter opener.

According to the rules of the Nighthawks, if there was a clear and correct recipient, Rozanne and the rest of the clerks would give the letter directly to the person that the letter was addressed to. If the recipient was anonymous or an unknown name, it would be handed over to Dunn. He could then ask around or make a decision.

Klein carefully pried open the letter and took out the piece of paper within. He quickly unfolded the piece of paper and read through it.

He realized that the asylum doctor, Daxter, was asking for an urgent meeting at two in the afternoon today.

Has he obtained the Telepathist formula? Or is it regarding something else? Klein lifted the letter in his hand and looked at Dunn.

"Captain, my informant, the one from the Psychology

Alchemists, wishes to meet me at two in the afternoon."

"Did he say anything else?" Dunn asked, as if he was expecting this.

"No." Klein shook his head.

Dunn thought for a moment, then said in a heavy voice, "Get Leonard to watch over Chanis Gate for the time being. I'll go with you and hide somewhere. These urgent requests to meet could sometimes be a trap. I've heard of many similar incidents. Furthermore, if it's something important, we can act quickly."

Captain, you sure are experienced... Not to mention being the most reliable, trustworthy Captain without memory issues whenever we have something serious to do... Klein immediately nodded.

"Alright!"

...

At two in the afternoon. Inside the small shooting range 9 of the Zouteland Street Shooting Club.

Klein looked at the target that was covered in bullet holes, then glanced at the uneasy Doctor Daxter Guderian.

"What happened for you to look for mercenaries at the Hound Pub in such a fluster?"

Only by doing so would the boss of the Hound Pub, Wright, hand the letter immediately to the Blackthorn Security Company instead of waiting for Klein to collect it himself.

Daxter observed Klein's expression and body language, then responded softly, "I find Hood Eugen a little abnormal recently."

Hood Eugen was the patient from the mental asylum that had roped Daxter into the Psychology Alchemists.

"What sort of abnormalities has he exhibited?" Klein pressed, displaying his professionalism.

Daxter heaved a sigh of relief, as if he had found a pillar of support. He said while deliberating his words, "H-he seems to have really gone insane..."

"Really gone insane?" Klein asked in shock.

Didn't Hood Eugen feign his illness and infiltrate the mental asylum to attempt to influence the patients in order to train his mental abilities?

He had really turned sick, genuine insanity?

"I think so..." Daxter paced around anxiously. "I could hold a normal conversation with him in the past and receive guidance on how to correctly use my Beyonder powers. But in the past few days, his thought processes and his condition has become really weird. I can barely communicate with him. He was just like my other patients, even though... even though I've managed to get the Telepathist formula as a result. But I cannot determine if it's real or fake. I'm afraid that there might be some uncontrollable changes that might occur."

No matter. As a Seer, a Seer who has the mysterious world above the gray fog, I'll be able to determine if it's real or fake... Klein heaved a sigh of relief before creasing his brows and asking, "Did he come into contact with anyone before he turned abnormal?"

"Only the patients. I-I cannot guarantee that, though. I'm not in the asylum for the whole day. I also need time to rest," Daxter said, his expression serious.

Klein nodded, as if it was something trivial.

"Don't worry. I'll send someone to protect you in secret. You should find out who Hood Eugen has come into contact with as soon as possible. Also, you have to be careful; he might be testing you. You

should also report this to the members of the Psychology Alchemists and see how the higher-ups of your organization react."

"Alright." Daxter propped up his golden spectacles, recovering the calm of a Spectator. He then took out a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it over to Klein. "This is the formula for the Telepathist potion, but I cannot guarantee its authenticity."

"We will verify it." Klein smiled in response. He unfolded the piece of paper on the spot and looked at it.

"Main ingredients: The complete pituitary gland of a mature Rainbow Salamander, 10 ml of spinal fluid from a Farsman Rabbit."

"Supplementary ingredients: Chestnut Spore 5 grams, Dragon Tooth Grass Powder 8 grams, 3 petals of Pure White Elf Flowers, Pure Water 100 ml."

"Excellent," Klein praised. He folded the piece of paper and stuffed it into the inner pocket of his tuxedo.

After exchanging a few more words and ascertaining that the "voices" which Daxter was hearing were subsiding, Klein bade him farewell. He cautiously made his way to the shooting range reserved for the Nighthawks. Dunn Smith was waiting inside.

"Captain, the informant gave me the Telepathist formula to thank me for helping him control the side effects of the potion, but he cannot determine the authenticity of the potion." Klein handed the piece of paper to Dunn with a stern expression. "Furthermore, he mentioned something else..."

Dunn read the formula as he listened to the concerns about Hood Eugen. After that, he nodded.

"I'll immediately assign manpower to keep the mental asylum under surveillance. You haven't had professional training when it comes to these matters and don't to participate in this. Go back and guard Chanis Gate."

With that said, he looked at Klein deeply in the eyes and said, "If we take this formula into account, you don't need to accumulate any more meritorious achievements. You can directly receive the

Clown potion after you pass the examination..."

And I'm paying double for the Clown's formula... And all this because I originally wanted to be rewarded double for the same piece of work I did. Forget it, I don't have the opportunity to mention that I already have the formula to the Clown potion. Klein took a deep breath and forced a smile, saying, "Hopefully I can pass the examination smoothly."

He was more than happy with Dunn's decision for him to continue to guard Chanis Gate. Not only was he lacking the professional ability to monitor and investigate, but his hand-tohand combat was far from satisfactory.

In terms of shooting, he was considered decent compared to the ordinary police. However, his teammates were all Beyonders that have had their physical attributes enhanced. Even if they weren't all marksman-level, they were very close.

As for hand-to-hand combat, Klein was merely a beginner.

Even with a Slumber Charm, a Repose Charm, and a Dream Charm, he was still considered a support-class Beyonder. It would be easy for him to deal with ordinary people, but he would be in danger if he were to come across any Beyonders who were adept at combat.

Until I advance to Sequence 8, become skilled in technique-based battles, and master a handful of spells, I can only complete normal supernatural missions on my own. Hmm, if I successfully steal the power of Sealed Artifact 3-0782 and make Flaring Sun Charms, that will be even better. It won't be impossible for me to win from a position of an underdog... Klein thought hopefully as he slowly walked back to the Blackthorn Security Company.

The next morning when he ended his shift and left Chanis Gate, the Nighthawks still hadn't obtained any useful information from monitoring Hood Eugen. For now, they had to place their hopes on their informant's internal investigation.

When he returned home, Klein had his breakfast quietly and laid down in his bedroom to sleep until noon.

He woke up naturally, washed up, and walked to the first floor, following the smell of cooking food.

"Melissa is preparing lunch?" Klein looked at Benson who was reading the newspaper in the living room.

Benson lowered the newspaper and said, "Yes, she has a guest visiting today. I wanted her to chat with her guest while I prepared lunch. But she doesn't trust my cooking and took the guest into the kitchen. How rude."

Benson, you actually managed to quickly realize that Melissa detests your culinary skills... Klein held back his urge to laugh and walked towards the single seat sofa as he asked, "Melissa's guest?"

"Yeah, you should know her. Elizabeth, we met her at Selena's dinner banquet." Benson leaned backwards and continued to read his newspaper comfortably.

It wasn't only at the dinner banquet... She came to visit for real... Klein turned to look at the kitchen with a stunned expression.

Just then, Melissa walked out carrying some plates and Elizabeth followed behind, also wearing an apron.

"Klein, you're already up? I was just planning on waking you up." Melissa laid the plates on the dining table delightedly as she said, "This is Elizabeth. You know her."

"Hello, Klein." Elizabeth's adorable face flashed a splendid smile as she greeted him.

Klein replied gently and politely.

After they greeted, Melissa blinked and spoke seriously, “Elizabeth will follow us to the Family Servant Assistance Association later. They hire a few maidservants at home, so she has experience in that. Her opinions might be helpful.

“Actually, we’ve already drawn up the requirements for picking a maidservant. Listen to this and see if there’s anything that needs to be added.”

Melissa wiped her hands on her apron and took out a piece of paper from the pocket of her home clothes. She opened it and read it out loud.

“1. Healthy.

“2. Hardworking and responsible.

“3. Good at cooking.

“4. Quiet, not rowdy.

“5. Simple family background.

“6. Looks ordinary.”

...

She read the requirements one by one while Klein and Benson gawked with a vacant look; they never expected that hiring a maidservant would be so troublesome.

“Melissa, weren’t you against the idea of hiring a maidservant?” Klein subconsciously asked when his sister stopped.

Melissa pursed her lips and nodded solemnly.

“Yes, I was against it. But as my opposition was in vain, I thought we should get this thing done properly. To be able to get it done well, we must be well prepared. Hmm, do you have anything that you’d like to add?”

“No!” Klein and Benson shook their heads in unison, causing Elizabeth to laugh.

After lunch, the four of them took a public carriage to the Tingen Family Servant Assistance Association on Champagne Street.

It was similar to domestic help firms that Klein knew of from his previous life, but it was also a little like a charity. They recorded the personal information and job requirements of different maidservants so that the clients could make their selections more easily, while maximizing the maidservants’ chances of employment.

Part of the organization’s funding came from charity organizations, and some came from a percentage of the payment provided by employers.

Upon entering the association, Klein and company were greeted warmly. A young lady in a pale yellow ruffled dress led them to some sofas. She smiled and asked, “How may I help you?”

Benson, who was pushed forward by his brother and sister, said, “We need to hire a maidservant.”

“Do you have any requirements?” the young lady asked like clockwork.

Benson recalled his siblings’ lack of faith in his culinary skills as he said sincerely, “Good at cooking.”

“Good at cooking?” The young lady creased her eyebrows and said, “To be frank, there are no excellent cooks among the maidservants. Why not hire a chef instead? If you need a female chef, we have quite a number of them in the association.”

“There is no one who is good at cooking among the maidservants?” Melissa couldn’t help but cut in as her initial plan was set back.

The young lady nodded and answered affirmatively, “The maidservants are either the daughters of lower class laborers or girls from the villages. They have few opportunities to learn culinary skills. Even after the simple training provided by the association, the most we can guarantee is that their food won’t make people sick.”

Melissa fell silent, finally realizing what it meant to have situations outpace her plans.

“That is regrettable.” Benson thought, reorganizing his words, he said, “Maybe we can amend our requirement to a maidservant who is willing to and is capable of learning to cook.”

Not bad. Benson is quick-witted... There’s no need for me to interject. Klein sat by the side, holding his cane and hat comfortably.

“No problem. During cooking training, we took note of girls who had outstanding performance,” the young lady replied with a professional smile. “Any other requirements?”

“Yes.” Benson felt the burn of Melissa’s gaze. He swallowed his saliva and took out the piece of paper from his pocket. He then read the items one by one.

The young lady listened quietly and only responded after quite a while.

“I-I’ll first check through the records and recommend some maidservants that fit the criteria. You don’t have to decide immediately. You can pick two to four of them. Then, I will bring them each over to cook for you once. You can decide who to employ then. Of course, you will have to pay the association some extra fees, and you will also have to prepare your own ingredients.”

“Alright.” Benson folded the paper and nodded politely.

The young lady stood up and walked towards the office, but she turned around after taking two steps. She smiled and said, “Can you pass me that paper? I’m worried I will forget some of your requirements...”

“No problem.” Benson held back his urge to laugh when he answered.

After a while, the young lady in the pale yellow dress came out with a stack of documents and passed them to Benson.

The information had each of the maidservants’ real name, birth date, family situation, facial description, health status, past experience, related traits, expected salary, and other information.

Seizing the opportunity when Benson and Melissa were reading the information, Elizabeth got closer to Klein and asked softly, “Don’t you have any requirements?”

“Yes, but this information isn’t specific enough,” Klein answered perfunctorily.

Elizabeth got even more interested.

“How would you choose?”

Klein smiled and pointed at the hidden pendulum in his left sleeve, “I would divine the best person to become our maidservant by writing down a corresponding statement about each candidate and eliminating them one after another.”

“...” Elizabeth was stunned, nodding vacantly after nearly twenty seconds. “The simplest and the most effective way... I totally forgot that you’re...”

She didn’t finish her sentence since Melissa, who had sharp senses, noticed that they were whispering and had looked over.

She looked at her best friend and her brother, then she showed an expression of deep thought.

Hey, Sis, don’t misunderstand! We are just talking normally... Klein coughed and picked up some of the information and casually read through them.

Very soon, they picked three candidates. They were asking for four soli eight pence to five soli two pence per week.

Benson didn't haggle over the maidservants' pay but instead discussed the percentage that he needed to pay to the association.

After some friendly haggling, he successfully negotiated the price from the maidservant's two weeks pay to one week pay instead. However, he had to pay a transportation fee of one soli for them to bring the maidservants over to try cooking.

After that, Elizabeth bade the trio farewell and left while the siblings took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

On the way back, Klein was getting uncomfortable under Melissa's scrutinizing gaze. When he got home, he went to the second floor directly.

"Klein," Melissa called him in a serious tone after thorough consideration. She said, "If you want to get engaged with Elizabeth, you have to work harder. Her father is an import merchant, and her mother is the daughter of a baronet..."

Wait, engaged? When did this happen? Klein looked at his sister in confusion.

How far reaching is her concern?

"No, we are not..." Klein didn't have the chance to retort before Benson interrupted with a smile. "Although Elizabeth is indeed a little young and her family is much more outstanding than ours, I find the two of you quite suitable for each other. But you might have to wait a few more years. She is still studying at a public school and wants to enter university. Marriage should be something to consider only six to seven years later. Of course, you can get engaged sooner than that."

...Can you guys not think that far ahead? Klein took in a deep breath.

"I do not fancy Elizabeth, or, well, more accurately, I do not fancy a girl who is younger than me by too much. I prefer girls who are more mature."

Truthfully, I can accept anyone within a reasonable age gap, just not now... He added inwardly in exasperation.

"You like girls who are more mature?" Melissa knitted her brows. "Then you should quickly settle the issue regarding your marriage."

Ah? Klein couldn't understand his sister's leap in logic. He asked in confusion, "Why?"

Melissa explained seriously, "You will be about 25 when you finish saving up for your marriage. Girls that are more mature than you will either be married or engaged when they reach that age. Do you want to chase after a widow?"

What the... Klein thought to himself in Mandarin as he wore a blank expression.

Benson smiled and refuted his sister, "Melissa, you don't understand. In this day and age, it isn't rare to see women in their thirties who isn't married or engaged within the middle class. They are mostly followers of the Goddess, and all have the ability to provide for themselves. They would rather be single than stuck in a marriage that they are not satisfied with. Yes, that's what I read from the 'Family' magazine."

"Is that so?" Melissa was a sixteen-year-old girl after all. She didn't have a great understanding concerning matters like this.

Upon seeing his siblings getting roused up from the conversation, Klein coughed and said, "What I meant by mature is their mental state. They don't need to be older than me. Furthermore, the person that should be worried about their marriage is Benson."

I'm sorry, Brother, I had no choice... he apologized in his heart.

"..." Melissa froze for a moment, then nodded heavily. "That's right!"

Benson was just about to elaborate on the marital problems of the middle class when he suddenly shivered. He looked at his sister who was staring at him and said, "I am now at the cusp of a turning point in my life. I have to devote all my attention to studying. I will only be confident of chasing after my desired girl when I have found a job that I'm satisfied with and have a reasonable amount of savings. Only then will I be able to provide her with a good life."

Klein and Melissa froze, then asked in unison, "You have a girl that you fancy?"

Benson, who had merely given a perfunctory reply, was shocked. He shook his head in a hurry. "No!

I was merely giving an example!"

...

In a dark, gloomy house of Backlund, Hillston Borough.

A middle-aged man with graying hair sat silently on a rocking chair in front of an unlit fireplace with a dark colored pipe in his hand. He looked at the guest on the sofa.

He was the master of this building, Isengard Stanton, a private detective with notable fame. But he didn't set up an office, merely hiring assistants to assist him.

Isengard, who was dressed in a white shirt and black vest, brought the pipe to his lips and inhaled in an intoxicated manner before slowing exhaling.

"The fee for a thirty minute consultation is one pound. If I were you, I would definitely not waste a second."

The two ladies on the sofa across from him were Fors Wall and Xio Derecha. They had found materials relating to Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos and wanted to ask this detective to consolidate the habits and actions of their target.

Of course, they had removed Qilangos's name and changed the description regarding supernatural incidents.

Xio Derecha handed the folder containing the documents to Isengard's assistant, a browned-haired young man wearing goldframed spectacles.

"Mr. Detective, I hope that you can find habits in the target's actions using the material we have provided."

Even though she wasn't tall, Xio Derecha had an air of authority when she sat straight and spoke with a deep voice.

Isengard stared at her and received the docket from his assistant. He opened the folder and took out the material within.

He set down his pipe and focused on reading page after page without missing a single one.

Ten minutes later, this gentleman slowly tapped on the handle.

"The target has an obsession with the wind... He won't stay for long in a polluted area in Backlund, the Capital of Dust. In other words, he could be staying at the Empress Borough, West Borough, Hillston Borough, Cherwood Borough, or the suburbs of the North Borough...

"The target is a psychotic serial killer with the need to kill someone every other day... The most logical thing he could do is to target the vagrants that have nowhere to go. Even the police have no records of the exact number of vagrants in Backlund... "The target wouldn't be living in an area too near or too far from North Borough or Backlund Bridge, which have the highest concentration of vagrants... It would be the act of someone unsophisticated to search for victims that are too close to him. That isn't consistent with your descriptions... If the target has to spend a large amount of time before he can find someone to murder, then he might lose control of his desires and commit crimes that would easily expose himself...

"The target is an experienced sailor and has exceptional mobility in the water... A reasonable deduction would be that he wouldn't be living somewhere too far away from the water. If anything unexpected happens, that would be his best means of escape..."

...

"In summary, we can outline the possible radius of activity for the target. He should be living somewhere close to the Backlund Bridge area. Perhaps somewhere close to both banks of the Tussock River—the West Borough or the Cherwood Borough..."

...

"I can only deduce this from the materials that you have given me."

Even though they didn't understand all of it, his deductions seemed to make sense. Xio and Fors looked at each other and nodded. They took back their materials and stood up to leave.

Seeing his assistant send off the two ladies, Isengard took out a bronze item from his vest pocket. It was an open paperback book. In the middle of the book was a vertical eye.

Isengard rocked his chair, rubbing the item while softly muttering to himself, "Qilangos has infiltrated Backlund?"

...

In a particular basement of Pritz Harbor.

The Hanged Man Alger sat in a chair, looking coldly at a struggling man.

This man was dressed like a sailor. His head was enveloped by a film of pale-blue water and his face was purple from holding his breath.

He was scratching at the film on his face with both hands, but all he could do was flick droplets of liquid.

Finally, he could no longer hold his breath and gave a signal of submission.

Alger smiled, then nonchalantly clapped his hands.

The thin film of water dispersed, turning into droplets that fell to the ground.

The sailor took in a deep breath and coughed violently. He coughed so hard that it tugged at his heart and lungs.

After waiting for the man to recover, Alger leaned back. He emulated the peaceful and calm tone of The Fool.

"Tell me the reason why Qilangos went to Backlund."

"H-he's there to complete a commission, but I'm not sure about the details." The pirate had completely lost the will to resist. He answered honestly, "All I know is that he might receive something that he wants. Qilangos once boasted in front of us. He said that if this mission was a success, he would be able to obtain something he's dreamed of getting for a long time. The Four Pirate Kings would then become the Five Pirate Kings."

An object he's been dreaming of obtaining? Alger knitted his brows and slipped into deep thought.

...

Klein didn't rest on Monday morning. He followed his plan and continued his investigation on the buildings with red chimneys in Tingen.

Unfortunately, he didn't come across his target.

He returned home near noon. He heated up the leftovers from yesterday's dinner and paired them with bread before taking an hour's nap.

At about twenty minutes to three in the afternoon, Klein put his book down and sealed his room with a wall of spirituality, once again entering the mysterious world above the gray fog.

He sat at the seat of honor at the ancient bronze table, extending his hand toward the crimson star representing Sun while ignoring the frequency of his heartbeats.

In the City of Silver.

Derrick Berg was sweating on the practice grounds. His vision suddenly blurred as a heavy fog entered his view. He saw The Fool sitting high above, deep within the fog.

He froze, then stopped whatever he was doing and bowed his head.

When the illusion vanished, he counted his heartbeats silently and carried his silver sword to a rest area quickly.

A thousand heartbeats later, he locked himself in a bathroom.

After about ten breaths, he saw the red light swell over him and swallow him in an instant.

Above the gray fog, Klein leaned back into his chair and tapped his left molar twice to stealthily activate his Spirit Vision.

He saw that the mottled color deep within The Sun's Ether Body had turned pure, akin to the light of dawn. He smiled and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Bard."

At the same time, he saw the stars behind The Sun's chair shift quickly, turning into the symbol of the Sun.

It transformed without my will, as if it was a reflection of the Sun. Also, other than the palace, table, and chairs, the items that I conjure cannot be preserved once I leave this world... They are very special... There sure are many secrets to this world above the gray fog... Klein took in everything in front of him as he contemplated.

Derrick lowered his head and replied humbly, "This is all due to your assistance. This is but the beginning."

He wasn't surprised that The Fool knew that he had consumed the potion.

Klein took out his silver pocket watch and looked at the time. He chuckled and said, "Then let us start the gathering. Remember, the frequency, or should I say gap between the gatherings should be about the same in the future."

As he was speaking, he established a connection with the crimson stars representing Justice and The Hanged Man before pulling them into the majestic palace.

Audrey looked at the scene before her and immediately greeted him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool. I have a page of the diary of Emperor Roselle with me."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Sun. Have you gotten the formula for Telepathist?"

How enviable it is for Miss Justice to always maintain a cheerful mood. I wish I could be like that... Listening to her lively greetings, Klein couldn't help but sigh wistfully.

He then recalled the time when she had taken out a thousand pounds so easily, and he realized that it would be very difficult if he wanted to maintain his cheerful emotions like Miss Justice.

The Sun, Derrick Berg, was a young man that cared a lot about his reputation. He immediately replied, "I have obtained the Telepathist formula."

For the past week, he had been settling the inheritance that his parents had left him. Besides the property, furniture, and a few sentimental items, the rest of the valuable items were brought to the black market in the City of Silver in exchange for the Telepathist formula and the Bard potion's ingredients. His meals were now rationed.

However, he believed that the situation wouldn't be for long. When he passes the combat examination, he would then join the team that cleansed the Things of the Dark in the outskirts of the city and be paid a decent amount.

When I become stronger, I'll apply to become a member of the elite squad, to explore the depths of the dark and find a way to remove the curse... Derrick thought with hope as he looked towards The Fool who was engulfed in the fog.

He noticed that last time after Miss Justice made a request to Mr. Fool, she was able to produce a page of the unknown Roselle diary out of thin air!

Although Derrick didn't quite understand what had happened, he felt that it'd be better if he watched Mr. Fool.

"First, recall the formula in your head. Then, grab the pen by your side and instill it with the strong desire to express your thoughts." Klein casually leaned back in his high chair.

As The Sun was from the City of Silver, which might be the Forsaken Land of God, the pen that instantiated before him wasn't a fountain pen, but a quill instead.

Of course, there still wasn't any ink.

Derrick didn't dare to doubt what The Fool said, so he immediately grabbed the quill that suddenly appeared by his hand.

He followed The Fool's instruction, and as expected, he saw the Telepathist potion formula appear on the brown goatskin parchment before him within seconds.

After looking through it twice, Derrick silently pushed the promised item towards Miss Justice.

Audrey was overjoyed and eager, but she took the parchment gracefully. She glanced at the page, and the words that Klein had translated came into sight.

"Main ingredients: Phantom Netherdrake's complete pituitary gland, 10 ml of Half Specter Rabbit spinal fluid.

"Supplementary ingredients..."

Main ingredients that I've never heard of... Hmm, I don't know enough. Audrey, who had been trying to learn more about the different types and names of Beyonder ingredients from Fors and Xio, seemed to fret in thought.

During such moments, she would completely forget how a Spectator should behave.

Suddenly, Audrey heard a light rapping sound. She quickly looked towards the seat of honor at the long bronze table subconsciously.

She was surprised to see Mr. Fool rapping at the edge of the table with his right index finger while he gestured to her with a nod.

What's going on? Audrey was confused as her eyes wore a vacant look.

Just when she was about to ask, the corner of her eyes suddenly saw some changes on the Telepathist formula. There were remarks next to some of the ingredients:

"Main ingredients, Phantom Netherdrake's complete pituitary gland (also known as Rainbow Salamander), 10 ml of Half Specter Rabbit (also known as Farsman Rabbit) spinal fluid.

"Supplementary ingredients..."

I know all of these! Audrey was stunned at first, then there was an intense surge of delight from the bottom of her heart.

"Thank you, Mr. Fool. You're really very knowledgeable." She looked towards the seat of honor as she thanked and sincerely complimented him.

The Hanged Man Alger didn't know what had happened, but he felt extreme contempt towards what Justice had said.

How could you describe a godlike figure with the word "knowledgeable"?

His existence alone is equivalent to knowledge itself to a certain extent!

Klein accepted Miss Justice's compliments without any misgivings because this wasn't something he could've done just because he had chanced upon the Psychology Alchemists' Telepathist formula.

After he pulled The Sun into the Tarot Club, he had been taking precautions against such problems by taking into consideration The Sun's special circumstances of being from the City of Silver. He had been constantly studying ancient terminology. Therefore, even if Daxter Guderian hadn't managed to get the formula in time, he could've made the notations easily. Through prior divination and comparison, he had made certain that both Telepathist formulas were accurate.

This is why we say, "Preparedness averts peril..." Klein thought smugly.

Audrey looked at the Telepathist formula a few times and then reined in her gaze unwillingly. She then personally expressed Roselle's diary onto a page.

"You deserve this." She put down her pen and looked towards the fog-engulfed Fool. "In addition to this, I'll give your Blessed another 300. Is 300 pounds okay?"

She sounded a little guilty because the three pages of Roselle's diary only cost her twenty pounds, while the Sheriff formula at Sequence 8 required 450 pounds.

In other words, from the perspective of simple math, she had to pay another 430 pounds on top of the three pages of the diary.

However, Audrey felt that it was thanks to her luck that the seller didn't know the value of Roselle's diary. It allowed her to buy it at a low price.

Emperor Roselle's diary costs at least fifty pounds per page! Audrey held her fist and encouraged herself.

300 pounds? Until today, I've only seen that much money at Sir Deweyville's place... Klein sighed and pretended to not be interested in money as he nodded and said, "A reasonable deal.

"This is my Blessed's information."

He avoided speaking of terms like "Backlund Bank" and "anonymous account" verbally through The Fool's mouth as they damaged his image. He made them appear on the parchment before her.

Klein had taken time to visit Backlund Bank's Tingen branch last Wednesday while investigating the houses with red chimneys. He had disguised himself and opened an anonymous bank account.

The account only required one to memorize his account number and the corresponding password in order to withdraw cash from any Backlund Bank branch.

If one found that it wasn't secure enough, he could also request to add in a signature and thumbprint verification. But that would be more troublesome.

In order to keep his identity secret, Klein left it with a password.

The password is written in ancient Hermes: "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

As ancient Hermes itself can be used for rituals and prayers, anyone who dares to copy the password would be reciting my name. Then, I'll immediately receive a signal, and can simply find out who's the one trying to steal my wealth from the world above the gray fog! Klein was very satisfied with the idea that he came up with.

The only downfall was that it would slightly expose the existence of The Fool, but the risk was within an acceptable range.

Audrey pushed the diary page to Mr. Fool as she took the parchment with the information of The Fool's Blessed. Recorded on it, was the Backlund Bank and a bunch of numbers that formed the anonymous bank account.

I wonder if Mr. Fool's Blessed is a male or female, and which Sequence he or she is... Hmm, he must be very powerful, at least not weaker than Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos... Audrey couldn't stop her thoughts from wandering.

But she quickly focused and memorized the anonymous account.

"It doesn't have to be so troublesome." Just then, she heard The Fool's low yet gentle voice. "When you get home, recite my name and you'll be able to write down the information directly."

This would be just like when I drew the red chimney scene through divination... An account number is very important, you can't memorize it incorrectly... Klein added in his head.

That works too? From Mr. Fool's words, he appears very confident. He lives up to his status of a godlike figure if he can even do this... Audrey was stunned at first before coming to the realization that everything seemed to make logical sense.

But, why did I have to memorize the formula earlier? Audrey was suddenly confused again.

At that moment, Klein pressed down on the page of Roselle's diary, but he wasn't in a hurry to read it. He looked to the side at The Sun and calmly asked, "What compensation would you

like?"

Derrick thought seriously and said, "As of now, I don't have anything that I desperately need... I should digest the Bard potion very soon. I shall wait until then to request my compensation. Yes, perhaps to prepare for the corresponding Sequence 8 formula or the necessary ingredients."

Sequence 8 is Light Suppliant, which I have... but the ingredients. Even if I had them, I would have no idea how to give them to you. Wait, he used the word digest... Indeed, the City of Silver knows of the "acting method"... Hmm. The highest Sequence there is only Sequence 4, so are they limited by ingredients? Klein nodded in deep thought, agreeing to the deal.

Audrey also sharply noticed the word "digest." She weighed her words and asked, "Mr. Sun, are you aware of the 'acting method'?"

Derrick looked at Miss Justice in confusion and answered straightforwardly, "It's nothing strange... The general education classes in the City of Silver teaches the 'acting method.'"

The "acting method" is taught in general education classes... Audrey stole a glance at The Hanged Man and realized that he was looking back at her. The two of them suddenly fell silent.

The origin of The Sun is indeed mysterious. I wonder where Mr. Fool pulled him into the Tarot Club from... The more I think about it, the more I revere him... Audrey settled down and looked at The Fool who didn't look visibly surprised in any way.

Then, Alger probed, "Mr. Sun, do you talk about any key things to look out for with respect to the 'acting method'?"

"Yes." Derrick nodded without hesitation. "It's clearly stated in our general education classes that the one and only key point for the 'acting method' is to 'Remember that you're only acting.'"

As expected... We're using an ingenious method to go around obstacles and completely break down the remnant spirits in the potion, without submitting to it... The Sun, you're such a simple boy. You just shared important information by accident... Klein smiled and cast his eyes on the diary page before him.

Messy Chinese sentences were scribbled on the yellowish-brown goatskin.

"2nd August. This goes deeper than I imagined. History sure is something that can be manipulated easily.

"5th August. I witnessed the abilities of a High-Sequence Beyonder today. It was scary indeed. There's a qualitative change that has happened to them in a particular aspect, it was as though they've transformed into a deity. It's no wonder that we describe them as 'Demigods', though I think calling them 'Legendary beings' is more fitting.

"6th August. There's something strange going on. Why would the Seven Major Churches adopt such a strange attitude towards the potions? At the low to middle Sequences, they not only provide the main ingredients to those who managed to advance, but they're also generous enough to share the formulas and demonstrate the process needed to create the potion. They would also explain in detail if a ritual is needed to create the medicine, yet finished potions are the only things they provide to those who are advancing to the higher Sequences.

"This isn't logical. Shouldn't they keep the formula a secret for the lower Sequence potions and give the candidate the completed potion since it's relatively easy to gather the necessary ingredients and create the potion? As for the higher Sequence potions, shouldn't they share the formula and make the promising members search for the ingredients due to the difficulty of obtaining the main ingredients?

"There must be some hidden secret to this.

"9th August. The events of the past two days have made me feel uncomfortable. I started the Industrial Revolution with my own hands and personally ushered in the Age of Steam and Machinery, but this will only become the hotbed for the descending of an Evil God upon this world?"

What does he mean? The conditions necessary for the Evil God to descend upon this world? Klein knitted his brows, his index finger tapped on the edge of the ancient table.

Did Mr. Fool encounter a difficult problem? Anything that can trouble him must be something of another level... Audrey looked at the leader obscured by the thick fog and interpreted his state through his body language.

Klein was indeed pondering over the problem related to the upper echelons, but he didn't arrive at an answer. He considered the possibility of using divination to gain some sort of revelation.

Yes, it would be impossible to divine something of use with such simple sentences. I'm not a prophet... What if I divine with the statement, "the conditions necessary for the Evil God to descend upon this world"? It feels too risky... The Evil God might not be as horrifying as the Eternal Blazing Sun, but its abilities might be much more mysterious. It might be able to trace the divinations back to me. There's also no way to divine how large of a risk I'll be taking if I were to divine that statement. After all, just divining if something poses any danger is dangerous once it has deities involved...

I'll keep this question in mind and put more effort into observation.

The arrangement of the Churches regarding potions is indeed mysterious. I wonder what kind of secrets they're hiding? Perhaps I'll receive some hints about that once Spirit Medium, no, Spirit Guide Daly is made Archbishop or a high-ranking Deacon and enters the core of the Church...

Roselle's description does make me look forward to the power of High-Sequence Beyonders...

Many thoughts flashed through his mind before Klein stopped tapping on the edge of the ancient table and looked at Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun.

"You can start your discussion freely now."

Alger immediately said, “Mr. Fool, Miss Justice, I received a new piece of information. Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos infiltrated Backlund to complete a difficult mission. He might stay for an extended period of time and create an appalling tragedy. Also, I know that this incident involves a very important item, an item that would allow Qilangos to quickly become a High-Sequence Beyonder.”

“Quickly become a High-Sequence Beyonder? Does he not fear losing control of himself?” Audrey asked, adopting the posture of a Spectator.

Qilangos was only a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed, so there was still a Sequence between him and Sequence 4.

Alger had expected this question. He answered honestly, “That’s why the object is important to him.”

“Of course, those are simply my deductions. The information I received goes like this: Qilangos believes that once he completes the commission and obtains the object, he will be the equal of Nast, the King of the Five Seas. The Four Pirate Kings would then become the Five Pirate Kings, and the Seven Pirate Admirals will be reduced to six.

“The average person might not aware of this, but as Beyonders, we should know that Pirate Kings are either High-Sequence Beyonders or are able to reach the combat strength of a HighSequence Beyonder with the use of Beyonder ships and mysterious items. For Qilangos to be acknowledged as their equal, he must reach standards that are close to that. That’s my deduction.”

All I know is that the King of the Five Seas, Nast, is a Sequence 4 Beyonder, but I’m not sure of the name of his potion... Klein listened on silently, not giving his opinion.

The Sun, Derrick Berg, didn’t understand anything The Hanged Man said. He didn’t know who was who, but he still listened attentively. He felt a new door had presented itself in his world.

Pirates? The place they live in has seas that are mentioned in books? Then, the environment these people live in is very different from the City of Silver... They don’t seem to be very worried about the curse or the attacks of the Things of the Dark. It definitely makes me very curious... But, Mr. Fool once instructed me not to ask about the secrets of others. It’s a very rude gesture... Derrick thought in his heart, once again observing The Hanged Man and Justice.

“You deduction is very reasonable. Of course, that could also be a mysterious item that could hold its own against a HighSequence Beyonder,” Justice replied with a smile.

The Hanged Man looked at the fog-enshrouded Fool, pondered over his words, before he looked at Justice and emphasized, “There are two key points in what I said just now, the first being the fact that Qilangos will stay in Backlund for some time. The second is that the incident involves a very important and very mysterious object.”

So, Mr. Fool, are you not tempted? There is ample time for you to send your Blessed to Backlund... Alger added in his heart but didn’t dare say it out loud. All he could do was beat about the bush.

Mr. Alger, you don’t need to emphasize this repeatedly, I know what you are getting at... But my abilities do not allow me to interfere in these matters. Furthermore, I can’t leave Tingen without permission... Klein leaned back and thought in frustration.

Ignoring the Blessed, I can actually find two relatively strong Beyonders to help...

One is Daly, who has advanced to Sequence 6, but I cannot tell her everything. The most I can do is mention that I’ve gotten some information that Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos has infiltrated Backlund and is living at a particular street and what he plans to do. That way, Daly might directly enlist the help of the Nighthawks, making the situation very complicated and troublesome... If you guys cannot find anybody to help you when the time comes, then I can try that to prevent a tragedy...

The second person is Mr. Azik, but I cannot expose my identity as The Fool to him. I don’t have a proper reason to get him to interfere with this incident...

Many thoughts flashed through his mind as Klein replied slowly, “I’m aware.”

Seeing how The Fool continued to not place much importance in the matter regarding Qilangos, he sighed and held back his disappointment. He started asking about the investigation Miss Justice conducted last week.

“...In conclusion, we have more or less targeted the general area Qilangos will be at, and we’ll soon start the next phase of investigations.” Audrey first gave a simple summary, then with the attitude that she was doing something important, said, “We need more information, preferably the hobbies and habits of Qilangos.”

Alger recalled, “He loves to fish, especially fish from the sea. He would slice it and eat it raw...

“He also likes hard liquor, and despises champagne, red wine, and the like...

“He will often look for women to relieve his needs whenever he heads to shore, and with his strong body, one woman will not be enough to satisfy him...

“He’s used to using cold weapons and avoids hot weapons.

“He cannot be away from water for long periods of time. What I mean is that he needs to swim or dive once every couple of days.”

...

Audrey committed these facts to memory, creating an ample character of Qilangos in her mind.

“Let’s hope that the investigation will be a success. It’s a pleasure working with you.” She smiled after Alger was done.

“My pleasure.” All Alger could do was force himself to believe in Miss Justice, who had considerable power in Backlund.

Throughout the interaction, Klein seemed to be listening intently, but in reality, his thoughts had been diverted to another question. That was the question of how to deliver ingredients to Sun if he did manage to obtain them.

Now that he had a passable understanding of the field of mysticism, Klein instinctively followed the line of thought of using ritualistic magic. This reliance was natural given the successes he had when using ritualistic magic.

When I was previously flipping through the confidential information of the Nighthawks, I came across records of the Goddess bestowing holy items to her followers. There were also records of items descending in rituals involving evil gods or devils... Does this mean that I can “bestow” someone something when responding to their prayers, and transfer materials that way?

In previous attempts, I could only reply with thoughts containing pictures and voices. But that doesn’t mean that it’ll always stay that way... There could be some new changes when I advance to Sequence 8...

There’s also something important to consider. Can I bring material from the real world into the world above the gray fog? And... Hmm... Oh right, there’s often a step for “sacrifices” in rituals involving evil gods and devils! Can I consider “sacrificing” something to myself?

In that way, perhaps I can bring some material from the real world into the world above the gray fog...

If this attempt is successful, I can get items directly from Justice, The Sun, and The Hanged Man, and then bestow them to myself.

Yes, “sacrifice” is considered a more advanced ritual, so I won’t be able to learn of it for now...

The most important thing to do now is to improve my abilities!

Klein reined in his thoughts, and once again listened in on the conversation of the other members. He listened as their discussion changed from Qilangos to the characteristics of particular monsters.

Sometime later, he smiled.

“Let’s end it here for today.”

“By your will.” The Sun, Justice, and The Hanged Man stood up at the same time.

After severing the connections of the members, Klein quickly descended from the fog and left the mysterious space.

When he returned to his room, he dispelled the wall of spirituality and pulled back the curtains by the oriel window, allowing the sunlight to shine in.

There are two important things to do this week. The first is to get examined and advance to Sequence 8. The second is to make Flaring Sun Charms. Its powers might be even higher than that of Sequence 7 or 6... Klein looked outside with anticipation.

Tomorrow. I should be able to receive the report of Mr. Azik’s paranormal disturbances tomorrow!

Tuesday morning.

Having completed his mysticism curriculum, Klein didn't look for a quiet corner to read "Comparison of Ancient and Modern Names" or "Nighthawks Case Compendium," and instead stayed in the break room to play cards with Leonard, Kenley, and Royale.

I only told Mr. Azik to create an opportunity for me to take Sealed Artifact 3-0782 out... It'll still depend on my improvisation skills to seize the opportunity... Klein's mind wasn't on his cards, so he played terribly. He lost five soli in an hour, and he felt the pinch. He planned to concentrate on the game to recover some of his cash.

After he bought various ingredients for the Flaring Sun Charms yesterday afternoon, his private stash of cash reduced to less than one pound once again. Plus, he had to pay two soli every day for the carriage rental fees to search for the house with the red chimney.

As they were waiting for Kenley to shuffle the cards, he picked up the copper penny before him and spun it casually.

He suddenly felt Royale's gaze on him, a very intense gaze.

What? Klein was first stunned, then looked at the copper penny that was about to fall.

...Is she wary of me cheating with divination? We're just playing cards amongst ourselves, do we have to be so serious about this? He suddenly understood and slammed down the penny with a dry laugh.

Just then, Dunn Smith knocked on the door and entered. He looked around and said, "There's a situation in Morse Town. Leonard, please handle it."

Morse Town? Klein felt his mind jolt as he pretended to ask curiously, "Captain, what kind of situation?"

Dunn glanced over and explained, "Recently, there have been a few paranormal cases in the area. Firstly, people would hear sobs when walking past the cemetery and see vague figures flash by. Then, a widow encountered her deceased husband when she woke up to use the bathroom in the middle of the night. She nearly fainted from the fright. In addition, there was an elderly man who lived alone. He began hearing heavy footsteps reverberating in the house all the time. However, silence reigned once again the moment he lights a candle or gas lamp. The people in the town are believers of the Goddess, so the local priest reported the situation."

No one got hurt, and it almost borders on the level of a prank... It should be Mr. Azik... Klein used an expression and tone that he had rehearsed many times. "Captain, there might be a secret link for these paranormal cases to happen so suddenly. In this situation, divination could provide an important clue. I think I can help Leonard."

Upon hearing that, Leonard's green eyes immediately locked onto Klein. He was apparently trying to find clues and traces from Klein's face.

Dunn nodded first but remained quiet and hesitant.

When Klein saw the Captain's response, he immediately added, "Some of these things might require ritualistic magic to purify them."

"Makes sense." Dunn thought and said, "You and Leonard will head to Morse Town then."

Without anyone saying anything else, he additionally added, "Hmm, you won't be able to make it for your combat training in the afternoon. I'll send someone to inform Gawain."

Phew, the first step is complete... Klein silently let out a sigh. He quickly packed away his soli and pence.

Then, he suddenly paused and looked sideways at Dunn. He said solemnly, “Captain, I think we should prepare for the worst. If there’s a powerful wraith behind the paranormal events, it might be very dangerous for only Leonard and I. Plus, it takes two, uh—three hours to get to Morse Town, right? Even if we manage to send a telegram to request for backup in time, we would still have to hold out for quite a while...” “So?” Dunn interrupted.

“I want to get the assistance of another teammate.” Klein pretended to think for a moment and said, “And, according to the rules, a mission with three or more Nighthawks involved can apply for a level three Sealed Artifact. Yes, 3-0782 is most suited for this job.”

Upon hearing that, Leonard laughed and said, “Exactly your

style. Careful, cautious, taking no risks.”

You seem to be implying that I’m a coward... I’m a person who looked directly at the Eternal Blazing Sun! Klein pretended that he didn’t hear Leonard and earnestly looked at Dunn Smith.

“Captain, what do you think?”

“We should really take extra care against any accidents. There have been too many coincidences lately...” Dunn nodded thoughtfully and looked at the other two teammates. “Kenley, join Leonard and Klein on their trip to Morse Town. Oh, hurry up and write an application. After I sign it, retrieve Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from Chanis Gate.”

“Alright,” the short Kenley said, putting down the cards in his hand.

Alright! Klein fist-pumped in his mind while he looked anxious and solemn on the outside.

At that very moment, Seeka Tron was monitoring Hood Eugen in the asylum while Frye was on duty at Chanis Gate.

Klein left the recreation room and put on his black tuxedo. He took his hat and cane, then waited together with Leonard for Kenley at the stairway that connected to the basement

There was no one there, and it was extremely quiet. Leonard suddenly looked sideways at Klein and said, “I think you’d better give up on any unrealistic dreams.”

“Ah... What?” Klein replied in confusion.

Leonard walked forward and stood by the edge of the stairs. He looked into the darkness of the stairway.

“Even during a mission, it will be impossible for you to discover my secret and understand my uniqueness.”

...Bro, can you stop thinking so highly about yourself? Did you think I applied for this mission to spy on you? I didn’t even have such thoughts! Enlightened, Klein chuckled.

“How can you be so sure that my uniqueness won’t help to reveal your secret?”

Leonard’s expression grew grave, but he then smiled and said, “It will, huh? I shall wait for you to discover it then.”

When I gather more information and items, I will go to the world above the gray fog to help you perform a divination. You’re welcome! Klein thought sarcastically in his head.

Soon, the small-framed Kenley brought the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem up the winding stairs.

When Klein felt the unique warmth and purity, he secretly heaved a sigh of relief. He knew that he had finally completed the very first and most difficult step in his plan of siphoning the powers of the Eternal Blazing Sun’s divine blood.

Then, the three of them left the Blackthorn Security Company and walked to Zouteland Street. They walked towards the carriage that belonged to the Nighthawks.

“Will the purifying effect bother the horse?” Kenley suddenly asked anxiously. “I don’t want a horse that can only praise the Sun to pull the carriage...”

He had been a Nighthawk for longer than Klein, but he was far from experienced.

“No, Sealed Artifact 3-0782 only purifies living entities with a high level of intelligence,” Klein lowered his voice in response.

If not, I wouldn’t be bitten by insects... he added blankly in his head.

“Oh, I see... Haha, I didn’t read the information thoroughly enough.” Kenley pressed down on his black silk hat and laughed in enlightenment.

As Klein had yet to master the skill of driving of a carriage, he sat inside the carriage for the following three hours. He rubbed the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 in his hand while he watched Leonard and Kenley take turns driving.

They finally arrived at Morse Town around lunchtime.

“How beautiful...” Kenley complimented sincerely as they stepped down from the carriage and looked towards the boundless golden wheat fields that surrounded the town.

The dates representing the Volcanic constellation was coming to an end, and the Bumper Harvest constellation was going to rule everyone’s life.

Leonard was in the driver’s seat as he looked around and opened his mouth, as though he was going to recite a sonnet.

But in the end, he only spurted one sentence, “How beautiful.”

Klein held back the urge to laugh as he put on his top hat, took his cane, and got off the carriage.

At that moment, a middle-aged man in a black priest’s gown walked over. He drew a crimson moon on his chest and said, “Praise the Lady. Are you the friends that Saint Selena Cathedral sent to help us?”

“Yes, Priest Siur. May the Goddess bless you.” Leonard jumped off the carriage and replied with a smile, “We’re here to take care of the recent paranormal incidents.”

“Seemingly. Seemingly.” The gray-haired, blue-eyed Siur saw many townsfolk approaching as he quickly emphasized.

Morse Town wasn’t big. Regardless of which direction one chose to travel in, one would enter the plains within ten minutes. The people who stayed there knew each other, so what happened earlier had spread.

Many townsfolk were waiting for the Church of Evernight to send people to resolve the problem. Hence, when they saw that the priest was greeting three strangers, they quickly surrounded them out of concern and curiosity. Some tiptoed and some tried to hear what they were saying.

Leonard chuckled and said, “Priest, don’t worry. We’re professionals. Look, we brought Holy Water, silver daggers, Dark Sacred Emblems, and also garlic.”

He took out the described items from the inner pockets of his clothes as though he was pulling a magic trick.

Garlic? Are you trying to stink the spirits to death? Klein found it ridiculous yet funny as he watched Leonard’s performance.

Siur wore a look of confusion, and he even started to suspect that the Saint Selena Cathedral had sent over a bunch of frauds.

The citizens who surrounded them revealed gratified smiles, as though they were finally in safe hands.

Leonard got close to Priest Siur and explained softly into his ear, “They believe in these things...”

Without waiting for the priest’s reply, he added, “Let’s have lunch at the church first. Then, we shall take care of those matters.”

Yes, lunch is very important... When those paranormal incidents are taken care of, it’ll be time to take turns looking after Sealed Artifact 3-0782, and also the opportunity for me to make Flaring Sun Charms... Hopefully, everything goes smoothly... Of course, making Flaring Sun Charms during the daytime would get the best results... Klein thought, brimming with anticipation.

Most of the buildings in Morse Town adhered to a style that was popular a hundred years ago. The most eye-catching building in the town was the black cathedral spire.

After settling the carriage, Klein and the others quickly finished their lunch of bread, toast, bacon, butter, and coffee.

"We can still tolerate about two hours and thirty-five minutes of Sealed Artifact 3-0782's purification." Kenley stood at the door of the church and took out a pocket watch from his suit's pocket. "I suggest dealing with the suspected haunting incidents first to prevent the situation from getting worse. Then we can return to the church and take turns watching over the Sealed Artifact to recover."

Under normal circumstances, Sequence 9, 8, and 7 Beyonders had to stay far away from the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem for two hours to recover completely, or at least an hour if they were to make a partial recovery.

"Alright."

"I have no objections."

Klein and Leonard spoke in unison.

"Then which case should we deal with first?" Kenley asked.

Leonard wiped away his frivolous attitude and said, "Let's start with the old man living alone who heard heavy footsteps in his house."

"Why?" Kenley asked instinctively. Klein was also interested to hear an explanation.

Could this be the intuition of a poet? He mocked Leonard secretly.

Leonard shifted his gaze from Kenley's face to Klein's, then looked at Kenley again. He smiled.

"Because it's the closest to the church."

"How did you know that? It's not written in the records..." Klein asked.

Leonard snickered. "Didn't I go to the bathroom during our meal? I came across a trainee priest on my way back and had a conversation. He told me that Noah's house was close to the church—Oh yeah, the old man's name is Noah."

He sure lives up to his name as an experienced Nighthawk when it comes to performing missions...

Klein gave a dry laugh. He turned to Kenley and said, "Then let's go to Noah's house first." "Alright."

Kenley didn't have any objections.

They arrived at Noah's house a mere minute later...

Noah was an old man with thinning white hair. He had lost his left hand in a war when he was younger and had no choice but to leave the army. He returned to his hometown after he received his compensation.

At that moment, he opened the door and looked at the three strangers in front of him before looking at Siur who was rushing over from the cathedral. He said with a raspy voice, "Come in, I hope that you can solve my problem. I heard that you brought Holy Water, Sacred Emblems, a silver dagger, and garlic? This is great, my worries have eased greatly. Please forgive my blabbering, you have to understand the condition of an old man after not being able to sleep peacefully for two nights, Oh my Goddess, I've been so scared all this time that my head feels like it's in a cloud."

Leonard suddenly straightened his back when he entered the house, his eyes surveying the surroundings.

After that, Klein felt a cold aura within the room. Those were traces of activity left behind by a ghost.

“There really was an impure being here.” Kenley was the last one to notice as he suppressed his voice.

“Very weak,” Leonard said with a relaxed tone as he retracted his gaze.

The Midnight Poet was a job with a relatively high spiritual sensitivity when compared to all the other Sequence 8’s in the Church’s records.

“Yes.” Klein could feel the warmth and purifying energy of Sealed Artifact 3-0782 quickly dispelling the sinister aura in the room without any trouble.

At this moment, the people of the town had all gathered at Noah’s house, all looking curiously at Klein, Leonard, and Kenley.

Cough! Leonard cleared his throat and recited, “We have the blessings of the Goddess, those impure beings will vanish quickly and won’t bring about any more trouble.”

After that, he shot a look at Klein for him to perform a “purification ritual” for everyone to see.

Why me? Klein shot a look back.

Of course, he didn’t know if Leonard understood what his gaze meant.

But clearly, Leonard understood. He said softly, “You’re the expert in rituals.”

Alright, blame me for being the one who volunteered for this mission. Klein tidied his clothes and took out the Holy Water, Sacred Emblems, a silver dagger, and garlic from Leonard.

He first placed the Dark Sacred Emblem in front of his chest, then peeled the garlic and tossed its cloves one by one to every corner of the house.

“Hmm, this is how garlic is used to dispel ghosts?”

“It’s different from the descriptions in the newspapers...”

“Will this work?”

...

The townsfolk looking at them broke into discussion, they were curious and excited, as if they were watching a circus.

It’s useless! I’m just acting! Klein suddenly felt that he had become a clown. He closed his eyes and splashed the holy water onto the ground with the silver dagger.

He splashed the water as he walked around the house, reciting an incantation, “The Evernight Goddess...

“The Mother of Concealment... The Lady of Crimson...

“Empress of Misfortune and Horror...

“Mistress of Repose and Silence...”

...

These typical acts of a charlatan shocked everyone present as the townsfolk fell silent.

And once people turned silent, it was easy for them to notice something they missed.

“What a warm feeling.”

“It feels like I’m sunbathing...”

“No, I feel like I’m looking at a pure sky...”

“How magical... Is this the effect of the Holy Water?”

“They sure live up to their names as priests from Saint Selena Cathedral!” “Praise the Lady!”

...

The townsfolk discussed in whispers. The looks they gave Klein, Leonard, and Kenley slowly became that of respect. Noah also visibly relaxed, not doubting that the problem had been solved.

Sealed Artifact 3-0782 is doing all the real work here... We don’t actually need to do anything to chase the ghosts away, all we need to do is stay here for a minute. It’s not tiring or troublesome at all... After Klein purified the sinister aura off every corner of the house, he opened his eyes and put away his silver dagger, drawing the shape of the crimson moon in front of his chest with a serious expression. “Praise the Lady!”

“Praise the Lady!” the townsfolk replied devoutly.

“We still have things to deal with, but we need absolute silence.” Leonard smiled as he looked around.

The townsfolk, after witnessing something so professional, didn’t stay. They receded from Noah’s house like a tide following Priest Siur’s lead. Even the master of the house had to leave temporarily.

“I actually wanted to take a nap...” Noah pouted as he walked toward the cathedral.

Leonard took a step forward and closed the door, then turned towards Klein.

“Perform a divination on the cause of this incident.”

“No problem.” Klein also wanted to find out what he could divine.

I know Mr. Azik did this, but he seems to be of a rather superior nature. Haha, a person that can live for 1300 years must be of a superior nature... So my divinations should definitely be affected. Under such circumstances, without the help of the mysterious space above the gray fog, even I’m not sure what revelations I would receive... Klein took out the pen and paper he brought along with him and wrote down a divination statement:

“The cause of the haunting at Noah’s house.”

He held the piece of paper and walked to a round table. He then took a seat, closed his eyes, and leaned back.

Klein suddenly saw a black mausoleum in his blurred, hazy dream world.

It was similar to a pyramid, but stood inverted and was almost fully buried.

A black fog obscured everything within the ancient mausoleum.

Klein snapped awake and opened his eyes.

“Did you find anything?” Kenley asked in concern.

Klein thought for a moment and described the revelation he received in his dream without hiding anything. He ended it by saying, “The mausoleum was definitely not in the style of the Northern Continent, I mean the Fifth Epoch. I’m somewhat of an expert in this field.”

Leonard nodded, seemingly in thought.

“That’s an Inverted Pyramid from the Southern Continent. It represents the entering of the nether realm from the living world. It’s a mausoleum that only the so-called Descendants of Death can erect for themselves, be it in the Balam Empire of the past, or its satellite states such as the Highlands Kingdom.

“In some sense, it’s the symbol of Death.

“Well, the ghosts are definitely related to Death. The results of the divination are undoubtedly correct!”

Ignoring Leonard’s mockery, Klein suddenly had an interesting thought.

Could Mr. Azik be the descendant of Death, or could he have made a transaction with Death to obtain such a long life?

According to a chapter from The Revelation of Evernight, as well as the internal records of the Nighthawks, Death was a malevolent god, once causing a catastrophe in the Northern Continent at the end of the Fourth Epoch. Those times were now referred to as the Pale Era.

Hmm, it's said that Death fell to the combined efforts of the Seven Gods... It's impossible to determine when Lamud Castle was built —but it couldn't have been built before the Pale Era.

If there was a connection, then there would be something to investigate regarding the person working behind the scenes, lives in the house with the red-chimney, and stole the skull of Mr.

Azik's child...

Of course, this could be an excuse for the Northern Continent to colonize the Southern Continent. After all, most of the inhabitants of the Southern Continent believes in Death...

The three Nighthawks didn't stay for long since they didn't discover anything. They soon left Noah's house and started dealing with the two other haunting incidents.

The same process, the same results. They quickly rid the town of the auras of dead spirits but didn't manage to find the cause of all the trouble.

Along the way, Leonard asked the townsfolk if any strangers had entered the town in the past few days, but received a negative answer.

Mr. Azik didn't come? He must've come and left in secret without anyone noticing him. He sure is cautious... When he said that he would be returning to Tingen by Wednesday, did he mean that these spirits would vanish on their own accord today, even if we weren't here to deal with it? Klein thought about it as he returned to the entrance of Morse Cathedral with Leonard and Kenley.

They could still last another hour and forty-five minutes with the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

"We'll take one hour shifts looking after the Sealed Artifact." Klein suppressed the excitement in his heart. He looked at the color of the sky and said, "Let's try to head back to Tingen City for dinner."

"No problem." Leonard glanced at Klein and laughed. "But for safety's sake, I suggest that two people look after the Sealed Artifact while one rests."

Klein froze for a moment, his mind churning quickly. He smiled in reply.

"Sure, but this way, we have to calculate the most logical rotation. Who gets to rest first? Who's next? And who will be last? How much time do we need to recover? And by how much? Well—I think that we have to establish an algorithm with an unknown value in order to establish the best way, then compare it with the effectiveness of having one person look over it at a time... It's even better if we can compare the efficiencies too. Let's first assume that the unknown value is..."

"Wait!" Leonard's green eyes were blank, filled with fear. "If that's the case, let's look after it one at a time. The person looking after it will stay in the cathedral during his shift, as it has a sufficiently large radius. Of course, we'll have to get Priest Siur and the rest to stay somewhere else. The other two will stand guard outside the church and prevent others from coming close."

"I share the same opinion." Kenley had felt a headache coming on as Klein spoke about the mathematical problem.

"Alright." Klein nodded, looking as though he was forced to do so.

If he hadn't been able to convince his partners, then he would have to make a deal with Leonard in secret, giving away some information about himself to get him to leave.

But the problem was solved now!

CHAPTER 162: INTENSE SUNLIGHT

Weak light shone through the narrow window from high above, making the interior of Morse Cathedral a little more visible.

Klein put his top hat on his knee while he leaned his leg against his cane. He sat quietly on the first row of the left pew and looked at the altar before him.

There weren't any statues of the Goddess except for a massive Dark Sacred Emblem. Its base was black, with a crimson halfmoon that was surrounded by radiant points of light.

On the wall behind the Sacred Emblem, there were a few openings which allowed sunlight to shine in from the outside. They were focused into tiny specks of pure light which combined with the dark surroundings to form a scene that resembled that of a lofty cosmos.

None of the traditional Gods ever left behind an actual image. Only their symbols are worshiped and glorified by people... That seems to be a manifestation of the command, "Do not look directly at God"... Klein let his thoughts wander. He wasn't in a hurry to make the Flaring Sun Charms as soon as he got the opportunity to be alone with Sealed Artifact 3-0782.

He felt that he had to be careful, patient, and had to wait. Within the first fifteen minutes, it was possible that Leonard and Kenley would enter at any moment to remind him about points that he should take note of.

In this extremely quiet atmosphere, time flew by quickly. Klein suddenly snapped back to his senses as he took out his silver vine-leaf pocket watch, flipped it open, and took a glance.

Twenty minutes have passed... He muttered to himself. He then set his silk top hat and silver edged black cane by the side. He got up and walked towards a hidden corner near the altar.

At first, he faced the side of the altar, but once he saw the large Dark Sacred Emblem and the holy scenery that resembled a depiction of a night sky, he felt guilty and uncomfortable. Hence, he turned his back to the altar.

Then, Klein took out the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from the inner pocket of his black tuxedo. He bent down to place the golden unadorned badge on the ground.

Klein took a look at the Sun symbol that was filled with abstract meanings, then he took out a small candle mixed with sandalwood. He put it right at the bottom of Sealed Artifact 3-0782.

That was the dualistic ritual that he learned from the Eternal Blazing Sun. He used an item that was closely related to the deity to represent "Him" while he used the candle to represent himself.

He took a deep breath to ease his tense emotions. Klein then took out the items required for the ritual, one after another, including a carving knife, two thin gold slices, Sun essential oil extracted from the combination of black-rimmed sunflower, goldenrimmed sunflower and white-rimmed sunflower, Golden Hand fingered citron powder, and also rosemary powder.

After that, Klein adeptly used the silver ritual dagger to guide the flow of spirituality. He guided it to flow around the simple altar and created a shapeless sealed wall.

He squatted down, placed the silver dagger down, and extended his right hand. He lit up the candle that represented himself by rubbing his spirituality.

Under the flickering dim light, Klein picked up the Sun essential oil and dripped a drop onto the flame.

With a puff, an illusory fog spread out with the slight scent of sunlight.

After burning the fingered citron and rosemary powder, Klein held the carving knife and golden slices. He stood up, took a step back, and then recited in Hermes, "The blood of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

“You are the Inextinguishable Light, the Embodiment of Order, the God of Deeds, the Guardian of Businesses.”

...

Inextinguishable Light, Embodiment of Order, God of Deeds, and Guardian of Businesses were all parts of Eternal Blazing Sun’s honorable titles. If there wasn’t the prefix of the blood of the Eternal Blazing Sun, the ritual would require the god’s response to proceed. If so, Klein suspected that the Eternal Blazing Sun would recognize him as the disrespectful person that looked at “Him” directly. Then, Leonard and Kenley would only find a pile of black ashes when they entered.

Plus, the ritual had to be conducted via Ancient Hermes, a ritualistic language that stemmed from nature. Only a language without any protection but had outstanding effects could allow an incantation to sidestep around the Eternal Blazing Sun and point towards the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

At the same time, as he was stealing the power from a deity, Klein had no way to divine if it would be successful ahead of time. He felt that it would result in him directly dealing with the deity again. So, he could only recite the rest of the incantation with a strained heart, “I pray to you,

“I pray for you to give me strength,

“Give me the strength to complete the Flaring Sun Charm.

“The blood of the Eternal Blazing Sun, please transfer your strength into my charm...

“Oh fingered citron, a herb that belongs to the Sun, please bestow your powers to my charm...”

...

As the incantation neared completion, Klein suddenly felt something light up before him.

The simple gold badge radiated with an intense light, as though the sun had descended onto the land.

Klein suddenly found himself enveloped in extreme heat. His hair was heating up rapidly and was almost on the brink of igniting.

His feet felt like they were stepping barefoot on yellow sand that had been exposed to the midday sun, and his face and body were greeted with the hot wind blowing from every direction.

In that instance, he felt that he needed to do something to let the burning energies out. Otherwise, he would turn into a human candle.

It required almost zero thought as Klein lifted both his hands. While his thoughts were boiling over like porridge, he relied on the combination of his spirituality and the strong winds, as well as his instincts and ritualistic guidance, to begin etching symbols, corresponding Path Numbers, magical characteristics, and ancient incantations onto both sides of the gold slices with his carving knife.

Outside the church, Leonard was standing in the shadows to hide from coming into contact with direct sunlight.

Suddenly, the sunlight intensified, like the hottest days of a year in early July.

He squinted his eyes and looked towards the sky. He saw that the blue sky had no clouds or dust. It was so pure that it made people gasp with admiration.

“Such strange weather.” Beside him, Kenley also noticed the changes in the sunlight.

Leonard responded with a smile when he suddenly turned his head.

He knitted his eyebrows slightly and cast his gaze towards the cathedral.

“Luckily Rozanne isn’t here. Otherwise, she would be complaining about the sun tanning her skin,” Leonard looked away and said with a smile.

The blazing sunlight remained intense for a few minutes before it returned to normal.

In the cathedral, Klein's carving knife finished the final stroke.

As he finished the magical characters that represented light, the spirituality on both sides of the gold slices suddenly melded together, as the light converged onto the metal.

No, this is even closer to godhood... Klein was finally relieved from the boiling and burning sensations. He examined the two Flaring Sun Charms in his hands with a clear mind.

The golden luster on the surface of the charms had turned dim, and the pattern looked ancient yet complex. There was a warm, damp feeling that seeped into Klein's skin bit by bit.

"Not bad. I finally have a more impressive trump card." Klein sighed emotionally.

He set the activation incantation for the Flaring Sun Charms as the word "light" in Ancient Hermes.

I want light and there will be light... He quipped, amused. Then, he put the Flaring Sun Charms into another pocket. He didn't put them with the Slumber, Requiem, and Dream Charms, because the Flaring Sun Charms would decrease their efficacy period.

"Yes, the power of the Flaring Sun Charms can be maintained for at least a year, or even longer." Klein reined his thoughts back and looked at the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem on the ground.

It didn't look any different on the surface, and it still gave off feelings of warmth and purity. Klein finally relaxed, and quickly completed the ritual and removed the spiritual wall.

At that point, he thought to examine himself. He realized that his clothes were almost drenched, and he was covered in sweat. The edges of his hair were slightly curly too.

Thankfully, thankfully... Klein sighed in satisfaction. He put away his things and returned to his original seat. He was so exhausted that he slept the moment he sat down until he was woken up by footsteps.

His eyes shot open, and he touched the Flaring Sun Charms subconsciously to see if they were still there.

"You don't look alright?" Leonard asked as he entered the cathedral.

Klein massaged his temples, stood up and smiled.

"I'm nearing my limit."

He took out his silver pocket watch and took a glance. "Just in time. It's your turn to look after Sealed Artifact 3-0782."

Before he finished speaking, Klein took off the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem and passed it to Leonard.

Leonard watched Klein walk out of the cathedral. Then, he dropped his frivolous attitude and examined Sealed Artifact 3-0782 attentively and seriously. He grew confused and looked bewildered.

After the shifts ended, the three Nighthawks began their journey back.

Before that, they told Priest Siur to take note of the town's situation. If there were any paranormal incidents, he was to immediately send a telegram to Saint Selena Cathedral.

At twenty minutes past seven that night, they finally arrived at Zouteland Street and returned Sealed Artifact 3-0782.

When he had made sure that the Captain didn't notice anything unusual, Klein left the Blackthorn Security Company and arrived home before eight.

He took out his keys and opened the door, only to see an unknown figure.

It was obviously a maiden who wasn't even in her twenties. She was in an old, grayish-white dress, and she was wiping the dining hall with all her might.

She had black hair and brown eyes. Her eyes were small, her nose wasn't sharp enough, and her facial features were very ordinary.

Who is this? Klein was stunned at first, then he realized that she was most likely the maidservant that had come for a trial.

At that moment, Benson lowered his newspaper and looked at his brother. He smiled and said, “A company that doesn’t allow employees to leave the office on time is annoying.”

“But it provides a salary that can counteract any kind of dissatisfaction,” Klein replied with a laugh.

When Miss Justice’s 300 pounds reach me, I’ll inform Benson and Melissa about my raise to six pounds a week, that way they would worry less about our family’s finances... Klein thought as he put his cane aside and took off his top hat. He walked to the living hall and lowered his voice as he asked, “Have you made a choice?”

He had divined the information of the three maidservants the day before, and he had found that all three were suitable. Hence, the decision was left to his brother and sister.

“Yes, Bella. Weekly salary of five soli. She’s very willing and also capable of learning cooking. She hopes that she can become a home chef, at which point her weekly pay will double. Her father is a factory worker at the Tingen Steelworks Union Factory, and her mother is a laundry worker,” Benson replied with a chuckle. “Of course, another thing that led Melissa and me to the decision is that the other two servants believe in the Lord of Storms, and she is a believer of the Goddess. I personally don’t mind the believers of the Lord of Storms, but Melissa didn’t quite like the idea.”

It wasn’t that Melissa didn’t like it, a more accurate description would be “I grieve at their misfortune and am infuriated at their refusal to resist.” Yes, it was said by Lu Xun! Klein recalled his sister’s behavior and revealed a smile.

Benson didn’t elaborate further. He put down the newspaper and stood up.

“Since you’re back, let’s have dinner.”

...

The next day, Klein entered the Blackthorn Security Company in a good mood.

“Good morning.” Rozanne looked to the left and then the right. Then, she said, “Old Neil is sick, let’s go and visit him at noon. What say you?”

“Old Neil is sick?” Klein asked in surprise.

Could it be that the ritual for treating diarrhea caused severe constipation?

Well, from the way he acted after learning of the “acting method,” it’s not impossible for him to suddenly fall sick... He’s getting old, so once his mind turns frail, his body would also suffer from those ramifications...

Rozanne nodded and said, “Yeah, he sent someone to the Captain to request some time off.”

Klein nodded slightly. “Let’s visit him at noon. Sigh, Old Neil sure is pitiful. His wife passed away early, and his son is busy in some other city. When he’s sick, all he can do is stay at home in loneliness and helplessness.”

That was the first thing he recalled from his first visit to Old Neil’s house.

Listening to Klein’s sigh, Rozanne opened her eyes wide and asked in shock, “When did Old Neil get married?”

What? Klein was left dumbfounded when he heard Rozanne's question. He recalled in his daze, "I previously visited Old Neil's place just last month. I saw a piano in the living room and he told me that his deceased wife loved music..."

As he spoke, Klein suddenly became alarmed as he began having unpleasant thoughts.

Rozanne knitted her beautiful brows and said with uncertainty, "Perhaps I remembered wrong... No, Mrs. Orianna and I frequented Old Neil's place during the earlier half of the year. There was no piano in his living room back then. I clearly remember asking him why he chose to remain single. His answer was that he hasn't met a lady that he wished to marry..."

There was no piano during the earlier half of the year, and he answered the question of why he chose to remain single... Klein tightened up and asked in a deep voice, "Rozanne, how long has it been since you visited Old Neil's place?"

"Not ever since Kenley became a Nighthawk, and Viola chose to resign as a clerk. I've been either burning the midnight oil or catching up on sleep, so how could I have the time to visit him? It's been... since the beginning of June." Rozanne became a little lost upon receiving the question, so all she did was answer honestly.

Klein's heart sank as if he sensed something was wrong.

He fished out a halfpence from his pocket and held it between his thumb and middle finger.

He took a deep breath and quickly decided on a divination statement.

"There's something wrong with Old Neil's current situation. "There's something wrong with Old Neil's current situation."

...

His pupils quickly darkened as he recited the statement silently and entered Cogitation.

Ding!

He flicked his thumb, pushing the brass coin into the air and allowing it to spin.

Pak! The coin fell right into Klein's open palm.

This time, the portrait of George III was facing up.

The portrait signified that it was correct, that it was positive.

That meant that there really was something wrong with Old Neil's current situation!

As Klein clenched the coin, he suddenly remembered the translucent pair of cold and ruthless eyes without any brows that he had seen behind Old Neil when he had just become a Beyonder and was experimenting with his Spirit Vision.

Old Neil had explained that the pair of eyes was a characteristic of ritualistic magic!

That's right, I also saw an almost formless human figure by the door at the periphery of the light. The color of its aura was identical to the surrounding darkness... Also, after I completely digested the Seer potion, I secretly changed the way I activated my Spirit Vision to the tapping of my left molar. I happened to look at Old Neil and he suddenly coughed violently... Scene after scene appeared in Klein's mind, turning his expression grim.

Rozanne looked at him and asked in fear, “Did Old Neil lose control? No way, even though he’s petty and stingy, and wants to be reimbursed for all of his expenses, he’s still a good person. He rarely gets angry. No way, he wouldn’t lose control...”

“I cannot be sure, but I think that Old Neil is on the brink of losing control.” Klein consoled Rozanne. He quickly made his way past the partition and opened the door to the Captain’s office.

Dunn Smith was startled by the sudden intrusion, nearly choking on his coffee.

“What happened?” He didn’t blame Klein, his expression instantly becoming stern.

Klein answered simply without hiding anything, “Captain, my divination tells me that there’s something wrong with Old Neil.

“Last month, Old Neil told me that his late wife loved music, but today, Rozanne told me that he’s remained single all this time.

“Also, on the day that I became a Beyonder, I saw a pair of mysterious eyes looking over everything behind Old Neil. There was also an almost transparent human figure near the door spying on us. He told me that those were characteristics of ritualistic magic.

“I felt that something was off and, thus, attempted a divination.”

After Dunn finished listening intently, he stood up immediately. As he walked over to to the coat rack, he asked in puzzlement, “Why didn’t you directly divine if Old Neil had lost control?”

“Over the past month, Old Neil hasn’t acted any differently from ordinary Beyonders. He even worked with me to help Swain deal with a Mandated Punisher who had lost control. I’ve also observed the colors of his aura from time to time and noticed that he’s relatively healthy other than his frailty that’s due to his age. Thus, I think that he’s only close to losing control. He could still be saved,” Klein explained his point of view in one breath.

Dunn put on his black hat and trench coat before nodding.

“A very reasonable deduction... Let’s go pay a visit to Old Neil now, and oh—try not to agitate him if possible.

“After that, we can attempt to control him and use ritualistic magic to stabilize his condition to prevent it from getting worse.”

Control... Klein had an idea when he heard this term.

“Captain, could we use Sealed Artifact 3-0611?”

He had been thinking about how he could resolve Old Neil’s problem and save him, but he hadn’t arrived at an answer as he had been too flustered, too uneasy, and too worried. He was reminded by Dunn Smith’s words and recalled that the Sealed Artifact might be useful.

“Number: 0611.

“Name: Peaceful Hair Strands.

“Danger Grade: 3. Considerably dangerous. It has to be used carefully. It can only be applied for operations that require three or more people.

“Security classification: Official Nighthawk member or above.

“Sealing Method: No direct contact with living organisms.

“Description: A simple decoration formed with many strands of black hair.

“As long as contact is made with a living being without any protection, the living being would lose all their desires and emotions, including, but not limited to: Hunger, Anger, Grief, Pain, Envy, Jealousy, Hate, Joy, Satisfaction, Greed, etc.

“It has been ascertained that living beings under 0611’s influence will even lose the desire to break contact with it. They will silently stay in their spot until the end of their life.

“If an external force is used to break contact between the person and 0611, then the person will gradually recover. But experimental data suggests that the prerequisite to this is that the person has not been in contact with the Sealed Artifact for more than two hours.

“Once the contact lasts for more than two hours, the victim would become silent for eternity.

“The highest Sequence tested is Sequence 5.

“You can avoid contact by means such as wearing gloves.

“The strands of hair do not have any living traits. It doesn’t have any inclinations of escaping the seal.

“Appendix: These strands of hair appeared during a failed advancement. It was something left behind when a Captain of the Nighthawks failed to advance to Sequence 6.”

The grayed-eyed Dunn nodded after he heard Klein.

“Great suggestion, I nearly forgot about 3-0611. Find Royale in the recreation room. I’ll retrieve the Sealed Artifact from Chanis Gate and submit the application after we come back.”

That’s the way, no time to waste! Klein didn’t dawdle. He immediately went to the recreation room and shouted for the usually expressionless Sleepless Royale.

“What’s the mission?” Royale asked calmly.

Klein exhaled and said in a serious tone, “Pay Old Neil a visit.”

“Pay Old Neil a visit... he?” Royale opened her eyes wide as she had an ominous feeling.

“It’s not confirmed yet.” Klein shook his head gently.

Royale didn’t speak any further. They slipped into silence, turning the mood heavy.

A few minutes passed, and Dunn finally returned from the basement.

He was wearing black gloves and had a tangled mess of black hair in his hand.

Compared to the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem, the Peaceful Hair Strands didn’t look particularly weird. It would be glossed over by people if it were tossed on the road somewhere.

After calling for the chauffeur Cesare, the four of them made their way to Old Neil’s house.

The wheels of the carriage rolled across the asphalt road that was wet from the rain. The carriage interior was more silent than the night.

It was unknown how much time had passed until Dunn sighed.

“Old Neil did have a partner that he was about to be engaged with when he was younger, but she suddenly became terminally ill. Old Neil risked divulging the secrets of the Beyonders and tried using ritualistic magic to save her, but he didn’t succeed. Old Neil back then was just a beginner in mysticism.

“According to the records, the Nighthawks back then were all on alert, afraid that Old Neil would lose control because of this. But luckily, he managed to find his sanity and looked normal.”

Let’s hope that this is a false alarm as well... Klein couldn’t help but draw a crimson moon before his chest and prayed, “May the Goddess watch over him.”

Dunn and Royale followed suit. “May the Goddess watch over him.”

...

The sky started to turn brighter as the dark clouds receded. The Nighthawks arrived in front of Old Neil's bungalow.

After getting Cesare to drive the carriage far away, Dunn collected himself and walked towards the main door, cane in one hand and Sealed Artifact 3-0611 in the other.

Klein pressed down his hat as he and Royale followed behind the Captain. They made their way past the rose and gold mint garden.

When they reached the door, Klein took a step forward and pulled on the rope connected to the bell within the building.

Clink! Clang!

A pleasant chime resounded in the house as it broke the heavy silence.

Clink! Clang! Clink! Clang! Klein pulled several times, then politely took a step back without making any further attempts.

The three Nighthawks waited patiently for a few minutes, but they didn't hear any footsteps approaching the door.

"Perhaps Old Neil went to visit a doctor and isn't at home." Klein forced a smile.

He hadn't finished his sentence when a melody came from within the building. It was the music from a piano. It was like a silent lake veiled by a thin mist beneath the moonlight.

Dunn's expression became abnormally stern and grave. Klein's heart sank as well.

Just as he was about to do another divination, he suddenly saw liquid flowing out from the gap beneath the door.

The stream of liquid was transparent and pure at first before being dyed crimson, a crimson similar to that of blood. It was an intensely dark crimson red.

The color of fresh blood was reflected in Klein's eyes as they intently locked onto the flowing liquid.

Just then, there was a light cough from within the house. Old Neil spoke with a raspy voice, "Dunn, why are you here?"

Dunn's gray eyes were extremely deep. His mellow voice replied calmly, "I heard that you're sick, so we came to visit."

There was a sudden silence in the house. A few seconds later, Old Neil roared in anger and terror, "No! You're lying!"

Without waiting for Klein and company to say a word, his tone suddenly became weak.

"Yes, I know my condition isn't quite right."

Old Neil... Klein closed his eyes, but the bloody liquid that was seeping through the gap of the door didn't cease.

Then, Old Neil raised his voice and said, "All this time, I've never hurt anyone, nor have I thought of hurting anyone! I never—I never betrayed the secrets of the Nighthawks, one even one! At the most—at the most, I've made claims for undeserving expenses. I really haven't committed any evil!"

"Klein!" He suddenly shouted like he usually did. "I told you about the maxim of the Mystery Pryers, 'Do as you wish, but do no harm.' I still live by this saying. I'd rather be patient—I'd rather endure than do things that will harm others..."

With that said, he pleaded sincerely, in fear, "Dunn, Royale, Klein, go back. Go back. Wait till tomorrow—by tomorrow, I'll be back to normal. I swear—I swear to the Goddess, I wouldn't harm anyone. Really!"

Dunn closed his eyes and asked extremely gently, "What do you plan on doing? What have you been trying to do all this while?"

"Me?" Old Neil was confused at first before he described with a tone filled with hope, "I'm trying to resurrect Celeste. Dunn, I found a way, I'm on the right track!

"You should have heard about it. Back then, I made a mistake during the ritualistic magic to treat her illness, so I failed. I failed to save her. I now know it was because I had yet to master mysticism. But now, I now have enough knowledge and experience to complete everything! It's regrettable that I wasn't inspired by the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and Daly's example. I missed the best opportunity. If-if I was a High-Sequence Beyonder, all of this would become extremely easy." As he spoke, Old Neil's voice sounded tearful, "No, I cannot give up again... Dunn, go back. Go back, please. I beg of you."

Klein clenched his teeth as he heard the Captain ask emotionally, "How do you plan on resurrecting

Celeste?" Old Neil instantly became very excited.

"I'll use the 'Alchemical Life' method to create an immortal body for her. Dunn, you might not know of it, but Sequence 4 Beyonders from the Church of Earth Mother are good at this. The corresponding Sequence in the Savant pathway can barely do it as well. Yes, I will complete it with the aid of God's favor.

"Then, I'll summon her spirit from the spirit world and pray for God's help to combine her spirit and body together.

"Isn't it a great idea?"

Dunn lifted the corner of his lips forcefully and said, “Yes, it’s a great idea. Old Neil, let us in. Perhaps we can help you.”

“...Dunn, are you still not willing to let me off the hook?” Old Neil pleaded, “Go back, just go back. I’ll return to normal tomorrow, really. Dunn, I swear I’ll never steal your coffee beans again. Klein, Royale, I swear I won’t make you help me with my undeserved claims! Really!”

In Klein’s and Royale’s blurry vision, Dunn lowered his head before lifting it up again. “Old Neil, you’re misunderstanding something. We’re here to visit you. You are our teammate. You’re sick, and you aren’t well. We definitely needed to visit you. Open the door. Let us see you so that we can be certain. If you’re really okay, we’ll return immediately. As you know, there are especially many missions recently. We have to monitor the asylum while we take care of various other sudden incidents.”

Old Neil hesitated for a moment before saying, “There’s really nothing serious about my condition, really. I’ll recover by tomorrow.”

The bloody water that flowed out through the gap under the door went down the stairs, towards the stone path, and onto the garden’s soil.

“Old Neil, we’ve known each other for about fifteen years now, right? We’ve worked on countless missions together. I’m really concerned and worried about you. I have to see you with my own eyes before I’ll be at ease,” Dunn said gently.

“...Alright,” Old Neil pouted. “There’s really nothing wrong with me.”

With a creak, the door opened slowly. Klein quickly wiped his eyes and allowed his sight to return to normal.

Then, he saw that the carpet in the lobby was red and sticky, covered in blood and hair.

He looked forward and up, only to realize that the living room’s floor, ceiling, round table, piano, and chairs were all covered in the same disgusting, sticky and hairy liquid.

Old Neil’s head hung in the air, connected to the ceiling by a thick liquid. His forehead and cheeks each had a pair of eyes. They were cold and ruthless eyes with no eyelashes.

The piano’s keys were dancing on their own, playing a melodious tune.

“Dunn, look. I’m really okay,” Old Neil said with a radiant smile. “Royale, Klein, you think so too, right?”

The moment he opened his mouth, Klein saw the same thick, hairy, and bloody liquid flowing inside it.

Dunn’s gray eyes shimmered as he chatted like everything was normal.

“Old Neil, where did you learn the Alchemical Life and resurrection ritual from?”

Old Neil replied excitedly, “I heard it. I tried the first part, and confirmed its authenticity! It’s a gift from God! He kept describing it in my ears. He kept describing, He is—He is...”

Old Neil’s voice came to a halt. More than ten seconds later, he continued in fear and at an apparent loss, “He is the Hidden

Sage...”

The Hidden Sage? Isn’t that the non-anthropomorphic god that the Moses Ascetic Order believes in? The god that was resurrected, bringing about evil and corruption... The Moses Ascetic Order has the complete Mystery Pryer Sequence... Klein’s heart stirred as many thoughts came to him.

Upon mentioning the Hidden Sage, Old Neil seemed to finally awaken. He looked around vacantly and observed everything.

In the indescribable silence, his six eyes looked towards Dunn, and he said with a bitter smile, “So it turns out—it turns out that I’ve already become a monster...”

Without waiting for Dunn and the others to reply, Old Neil suddenly revealed a smile, one of groveling, fear, and cowardice.

“Let me go. I’ll go deep into the mountains and won’t appear again. I’ll never harm anyone. I’ll only attempt my ritual quietly, really. Let me go, please. I beg of you.”

Just then, Klein felt something illusory shatter before his eyes.

Then, Old Neil’s four cold-looking lashless eyes flashed with a dark glow and locked onto Dunn. His expression suddenly turned cold.

“You’re pulling me into a dream!

“No, it’s useless! My eyes can see through all of that!”

The sticky blood that covered the ceiling, floor, and walls started squirming, like a giant opening its mouth to swallow Klein and company. Old Neil’s head grew blurry like overlapping afterimages.

Klein didn’t fumble for his revolver; instead, he extended his hand into his pocket and planned to use his Slumber Charm.

Suddenly, everything calmed down before him. The sticky, bloody liquid suddenly turned placid like a still lake.

Old Neil lost his coldness, hatred, desire, and all other expressions. He became quiet and peaceful.

It was unknown when Dunn had thrown Sealed Artifact 3-0611 into the blood.

The four lashless eyes on Old Neil’s forehead and cheeks slowly closed, seemingly having lost the desire to keep them open.

Any living creature that came into contact with the Peaceful Hair Strands would turn peaceful and lose all motivation until the end of their life.

Dunn, Klein, and Royale drew their guns at the same time and aimed at Old Neil’s head.

Then, Old Neil revealed a look of extreme fear. He was struggling, his strong desire to live fought against the effects of Sealed Artifact 3-0611.

The four extra eyes disappeared. The wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and mouth were still deep, his hair was still white, his crimson eyes were still turbid, just like when Klein had first met him.

“Dunn, do you remember the time I saved you...

“Royale, do you remember when I helped you redeem your family’s lives...

“Klein, do you remember how I taught you mysticism every day? Do you remember when we talked about how to make claims? Do you remember how I made you hand-ground coffee? Do you remember when we fought against a Mandated Punisher Rampager?”

...

The illusory pleading echoed in Klein’s ears, and his right hand that was holding the revolver trembled. He found it difficult to pull the trigger.

Bang! Bang!

The two silver demon hunting bullets flew out and penetrated Old Neil’s head one after another.

Klein watched as the familiar, abnormal face revealed a hopeless expression. He saw the man’s skull tear open, the red and white within spurting in all directions.

The sticky blood that coated their surroundings started shrinking as it flowed back into Old Neil's broken head that had fallen to the ground. Dunn and Royale lowered their guns simultaneously, and all was silent.

Klein looked at everything before him—Old Neil's "corpse" was becoming a ball of rotten flesh. He saw that there was a pair of eyes, crimson and crystal clear, yet incredibly pained amidst the blood and flesh.

He felt like everything that had happened was just a dream and found it impossible to bring himself into believing the sequence of events and how it had ended.

He stood dumbfounded as he saw Dunn take two steps forward, his figure stooped.

Dunn looked at Old Neil's "corpse" and muttered heavily, "We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness."

"We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness."

Dunn's words echoed throughout Old Neil's house. They reverberated across the corroded floor, the walls, and ceiling, as well as within Klein's mind and soul.

He'd never had a stronger impression of that sentence than the one he had now.

He felt that he wouldn't forget this feeling for as long as he lived, even if he were to return to Earth.

Amidst the still atmosphere, Dunn walked towards Old Neil's "corpse" and kneeled down. He took out a white handkerchief from the pocket of his trench coat and covered it over the dark red, crystalline eyeball which looked pained.

At this moment, Klein noticed that the keys of the piano had stopped moving. A faint, translucent figure appeared.

This... Klein, who had activated his Spirit Vision before entering the house, froze.

He hadn't noticed this strange "soul" until now!

Was it because he was distracted by Old Neil, or was it due to Old Neil's abilities after he lost control? Klein saw the formless figure evaporate quickly, vanishing before his very eyes. He had a faint idea of what was going on.

Suppressing the heavy feeling in his heart, he heard the Captain give an order, "Search Old Neil's house carefully for possible clues."

"Alright." When Klein spoke, it took him a minute to recognize his own voice. His voice was raspy and deep as if he had the flu.

"Alright," Royale also replied.

The condition of her voice is about the same as mine... It's like our nostrils are blocked... Klein looked at his female teammate, who typically didn't have much of an expression. It was as if he was knowing her for the first time.

Placing his cane on an umbrella rack near the door, he made his way around Sealed Artifact 3-0611. He took heavy steps into the living room and up to the second floor. He then searched every room for possible clues.

Old Neil employed someone to clean the rooms regularly, so the rooms weren't as messy as one would expect of a bachelor. Everything was in order as if there was a female presence in the house.

Half an hour later, Klein found a few handwritten notes on a bookshelf in Old Neil's room. The notes recorded a weird, mysterious ritual:

"Alchemical Life.

"The materials required include: 100ml of spring water from the Spring of Elves (Golden Spring on Sonia Island), 50 grams of Star Crystal, half a pound of pure gold, 5 grams of phlogiston, 30 grams of red iron... And a large quantity of fresh blood from living people."

Old Neil annotated beneath the part about fresh blood from the living.

"I can consider drawing my own blood, accumulating it little by little and preserve it using ritualistic magic."

I can consider drawing my own... Klein closed his eyes and crushed the notes.

...

On Thursday morning at nine, the time of the moon. Raphael Cemetery.

Klein was wearing his black formal suit and holding onto his cane. He stood silently in a corner of the cemetery.

He had stuffed a neat white handkerchief in his breast pocket and was holding onto a Slumber flower.

Dunn, Frye, Leonard, and Kenley were carrying a black coffin that stored Old Neil's corpse. They slowly walked to the front of the tombstone and silently lowered it into the grave.

As she saw the brown soil being tossed into the grave, Rozanne, who was wearing a black dress and a white flower in her hair, wept.

"Can someone tell me if this is all happening for real?

"Why did he lose control, why did he consume the potion, why did he become a Beyonder, why must there be wraiths and monsters, why is there no safer way? Why, why, why..."

Klein silently listened on until Old Neil's coffin was completely buried in the soil; until all signs that he existed were buried deep within the earth.

"May the Goddess bless you." He drew a crimson moon in front of his chest, then took a few steps forward and placed the Slumber flower in front of the tomb.

"May the Goddess bless you." Dunn, Frye, and the others tapped at their chests in a clockwise fashion.

Klein looked up, straightened his back, and saw the black and white photograph on the tombstone.

Old Neil was wearing his classic black hat; his white hair was peeking out around the edges. The wrinkles beside his eyes and mouth were deep, his dark red eyes a little turbid.

He was so peaceful, no longer feeling grief, pain, or fear.

There was an epitaph carved underneath the photograph. It came from the contents of the last entry in Old Neil's diary: "If I cannot save her, then I shall accompany her."

The morning breeze blew gently. The silence and emptiness of the Raphael Cemetery hung over everyone.

...

In the afternoon, Klein took a form signed by the Captain to the armory.

He opened the half-closed door and saw Bredt with a thick, black beard behind the table.

Klein froze visibly before handing the form over.

"Fifty rounds of ordinary bullets."

During his request, he glanced at the tin can on the table. He felt as though he could smell the fragrance of the hand-ground coffee and hear the cheeky words in his ears, "But why must you wait till you have spare cash? You can apply to Dunn and get him to approve of the expenses!"

...

Bredt noticed Klein's expression and sighed.

"I can understand what you're feeling right now. I, myself, cannot believe that Old Neil would leave us like that. Sometimes, I even feel as though this is a dream conjured by the Captain."

"Perhaps this is the destiny of many Nighthawks," Klein replied with a bitter smile.

After this incident, he felt much more disappointment and hatred toward the upper echelons of the Church for keeping the "acting method" a secret.

"Let's hope that there will be fewer such tragedies, may the Goddess bless us." Bredt drew a crimson moon in front of his chest. He took the application form and walked into the armory.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The smell of gunpowder filled the air. Klein vented his frustrations onto the target he was shooting at until he finished shooting the bullets that he had requested. He then collected himself and took a public carriage to Gawain's house.

He completed sets upon sets of exercises as if he was torturing himself, until Gawain told him to stop.

"Combat practice isn't there for you to harm yourself." Gawain looked at Klein with his turbid green eyes.

"I'm sorry, Teacher. I'm a little down today." Klein exhaled and attempted to explain.

"What happened?" Gawain asked without a ripple of emotion.

Klein thought for a moment, then gave a simple reply, "A friend of mine passed away suddenly."

Gawain was silent for a few seconds. He stroked his blond mustache and said with a fleeting voice, "I once lost 325 friends in the span of five minutes, amongst them were 10 that I could trust with my life."

Klein sighed in realization. "That is the cruelty of war."

Gawain shot a glance at him and let out a self-deprecating laugh.

"The cruelest thing of all is the fact that I can never exact revenge for them. I can never fulfill their dreams, and the answer eludes me forever.

"As for you, you still have such a chance. Even though I don't exactly know what happened, I know that you're still young. You still have many opportunities."

Klein was silent for a moment. He took in a breath and collected himself.

"Thank you, Teacher."

Gawain nodded and said without any expression, "Take a tenminute break, then do ten more sets of the exercises you were doing just now."

"..." Klein was momentarily unsure what expression he should show.

...

Friday morning, in the recreation room of the Nighthawks.

Klein, Seeka Tron, and Frye were seated around the round table, but they weren't playing cards. One of them was flipping through newspapers, the other was looking out the oriel windows in a daze, and the last was holding onto a pen, wanting to write something but failing to do so.

The room was quiet. No one spoke, and no one joked around. The atmosphere was heavy.

Phew... Klein exhaled. He lowered his newspaper and planned to focus on reading the materials he had found.

At that moment, Dunn Smith knocked and entered the room. He looked around before saying, "Klein, come out for a moment."

What happened? Klein, who had a premonition of what was happening, stood up and made his way out of the recreation room.

Dunn stood at the entrance of the stairway leading to the basement. He turned and looked at Klein.

"The person that the Holy Cathedral sent is here."

The person examining me is here? Klein's nerves tensed.

There was a cold breeze blowing from the basement, providing a hint of relief for Klein's tense emotions.

It's finally here.

Once I pass this stage, I won't have to worry about being examined like this for at least half a year...

Once I advance to Sequence 8 and become a so-called "Clown," I'll possess actual combat strength. With the aid of divination and my Flaring Sun Charms for backup, I'll have a chance of surviving even more relatively dangerous situations...

Since I was waiting for the Holy Cathedral's examination, I haven't even dared to withdraw the three hundred pounds that Miss Justice transferred to the anonymous account. Just in case they audit my financial situation and find out that I'm in possession of a large sum of money from an unknown source...

...

Just as Klein's thoughts flashed through his mind uncontrollably, Dunn Smith smoothed his sleeve and said in a low voice, "The person in charge of the examination is one of the nine high-ranking deacons of the Nighthawks, Crestet Cesimir. The Holy Cathedral attaches great importance to you." "A high-ranking deacon?" Klein blurted in surprise.

In general terms, the thirteen archbishops and nine highranking deacons made up the upper echelons of the church. It was said that there was no lack of High-Sequence Beyonders among them!

The twenty-two ladies and gentlemen were all equal in terms of their rankings. They only followed the orders of the Evernight Goddess, and they were only answerable to the Pope.

Dunn took a whiff of the cold wind from the basement before nodding faintly.

"Yes, he's a high-ranking deacon. But you don't have to be nervous. Crestet is only a Sequence 5 and has yet to enter a demigod state. So, you don't have to be too afraid or reverent.

"Oh, his title in the Beyonder world is the 'Goddess's Sword.' As he possesses a holy item, his combat strength is similar to a newly advanced Sequence 4 Beyonder.

"I just chatted with him. He was very friendly."

If I read between the lines, Captain is telling me that he only said what was necessary. He doesn't want me to be nervous and go according to the plan... Klein nodded thoughtfully and asked, "Where should I met the high-ranking deacon?"

"The alchemy room where we concoct potions," Dunn replied simply, as a hint of gloominess flashed across his face.

The alchemy room where we concoct potions? The laboratory where Old Neil made my Seer potion? Klein slowly let out a breath and returned to the Nighthawks recreation room and took his outerwear from the clothes rack.

He put on the black trench coat, placed his hands into his pockets, and walked down the winding stairs that connected to the basement. Then, he took a left turn at the cross junction.

Very quickly, Klein saw a secret door under the light of the elegant gas lamps that lined the walls. He saw that the long tables in the room had been moved aside to open up a large space in the center of the room.

There were two classic high back chairs facing each other with less than a meter in-between them.

There was a man in his thirties wearing a black trench coat and a white shirt seated on the chair that was facing the door.

His golden-brown hair was cut very short, and his blackishgreen eyes were as dark as a forest on a moonless night. The collars of his shirt and trench coat were put up, and his entire chin was hidden within the shadows.

“Hello, Reverend Cesimir.” Klein bowed.

Crestet Cesimir had his right leg crossed over his left as he leisurely leaned back into his chair. He smiled and replied, “Hello, Klein. You may sit over there.”

He pointed at the high back chair opposite him.

By the side of his leg was a suitcase made of silver. It was about the size of a violin case.

It can carry a sword with an appropriate length... Klein walked forward and sat at his appointed seat.

Crestet rested his right index finger on his upper lip as he thought for a few seconds.

“I plan to first examine how well you’ve mastered your potion. That’s not a problem, right?”

“Not at all.” Klein shook his head with utmost confidence.

“Very confident.” Crestet smiled but maintained his previous posture. All he did was intently watch Klein.

Klein suddenly felt the light from the surrounding gas lamps vanish, as though they were swallowed by the rich darkness.

He suddenly became exhausted, as though his biological clock had struck the time for sleep.

But, his mind was extremely tense, making it impossible to relax. It was just like when he was unable to sleep peacefully due to over-exhaustion.

The silent “night” filled his surroundings as Klein heard the noise of dripping water from a tap that wasn’t closed properly. Then, he heard the conversations in the Blackthorn Security Company and the movement of the wind blowing through the stairway.

Besides that, he didn’t see anything that he shouldn’t see, nor did he hear any noises that he shouldn’t be able to hear.

“Excellent.” Crestet’s hypnotic voice dispersed the darkness, and the light from the gas lamps inside and outside the alchemy room came into Klein’s sight again.

Klein suddenly shook off his exhaustion and returned to his previous energetic self.

He affected me without me realizing it... Is that what a Sequence 5 Beyonder is capable of? This is the horror of a high-ranking deacon? He recalled what had happened and felt a little frightened.

Crestet Cesimir clasped his hands and put them on his knees. He bent down slightly, and his lips were blocked by his collar.

“You passed the test. You achieved a level beyond outstanding in the mastery of your potion.

“I’ll need to observe to see if there are any hidden dangers in your mind, to make sure that the potion’s remaining spirit hasn’t changed your character subconsciously or left some problems behind.

“You have three minutes to prepare.”

Klein immediately nodded and said, “Alright.”

He secretly took a breath and allowed himself to enter Cogitation to remove various negative thoughts.

Crestet didn’t speak again. He took out a silver pocket watch from the inner pocket of his black trench coat and flipped it open.

Then, he attentively watched the second hand move.

Three minutes later, Crestet closed his pocket watch and said with a smile, “I’ll begin singing.”

Singing? Klein wore a look of confusion.

Before Klein could reply, Crestet started humming a lovely melody.

The melody reverberated in the alchemy room and gradually lost its harmony and went out of tune.

Squeak! Scratch! Zing! Klein heard the noise akin to the scratching of blackboards with nails, the sound of bubble wrap rubbing against each other, electric drills drilling, and various other annoying noises.

The noises intensified and turned more and more chaotic. They made him want to vent his frustrations and cause destruction.

But Klein, who frequently experienced the mad ravings and terrifying screams, restrained his urges very quickly.

He displayed annoyance, tension, frustration, and insecurity at appropriate times.

Being in too perfect of a state would end up being a problem!

It was unknown when Crestet Cesimir had stopped singing. The noises in the alchemy room disappeared and room the was awash with tranquility and silence.

Silence sure is great! Klein exclaimed in his head.

“Very good, excellent. There are no latent problems in your soul. Of course, if you wanted to beat me up or stuff my mouth with something, that’s only normal.” Crestet’s mouth was blocked by his collar so Klein could only determine his emotions through his tone.

“No, I wouldn’t dare,” Klein admitted honestly.

Crestet smiled and said, “Congratulations, you have passed all the tests. Now it’s time for the question and answer session.”

His green eyes suddenly darkened. His gaze was deep, as though he could see through flesh, and looked directly at the spirit.

“Go ahead,” Klein replied, sitting straight.

Crestet maintained his earlier posture and casually asked, “You said that your experience in the Divination Club allowed you to quickly master the potion?”

“Yes,” Klein answered frankly but didn’t describe further.

Crestet nodded slightly and said, “And you said that your inspiration came from the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and also Daly’s example?”

“Yes.” Klein confirmed this first before explaining in detail, “I found out from one of my teammates who was a Mystery Pryer that those who abide by the maxim of the Mystery Pryers have a lower probability of losing control than normal. After that, I heard that Madam Daly once said that she wanted to be a real Spirit Medium and that she is a genius that leveled up to Sequence 7 within two years.

“After noticing both situations, I thought I could give it a try, I attempted to be a real Seer and outlined some principles for a Seer. The outcome was better than I expected. I mastered the potion very quickly. Reverend Cesimir, I’m not sure if you have had a similar experience. When I fully mastered the potion, there was a very special, very magical feeling...” Klein described his experience as if he only vaguely understood the “acting method.”

The man he had been when he was on earth would've been nervous and embarrassed to speak so many half-lies before such a powerful Nighthawk. But ever since he transmigrated to the current world, he had lied so much that he was used to it. He could do it flawlessly.

The darkness in Crestet's eyes disappeared, and his gaze returned to normal. He smiled and said, "Don't worry, it's not an illusion."

From his answer, Klein couldn't see any doubt or scrutiny, so he felt at ease.

"Dunn endorsed your experience. I believe that you really are a genius, with a logical mind and sharp senses," Crestet complimented. He then asked, "Did you share your experience with your teammates?"

"Of course," Klein admitted frankly. "I hope that I can help them lower the risk of losing control. We're teammates, comrades that face danger together. I don't have any reason to hide the truth. But for the same reason, I didn't tell the clerks."

Crestet uncrossed his right leg and sat up straight. His thin lips were exposed from the shadow of his collar.

He lifted the corner of his lips and said, "Although you haven't even been with the Nighthawks for two months, I believe that your understanding of partners is much better than many others.

"Hmm, I plan to share more information with you, but according to the Holy Cathedral's rules, you have to swear to the Goddess that you won't reveal the contents of our conversation to anyone that doesn't know about this.

"That should be fine, right?"

I passed the test? Klein was delighted. He nodded without hesitation.

"No problem!"

Although I won't be able to teach others the "acting method," I can let Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man do so indirectly!

"Alright." Crestet Cesimir nodded. He leaned forward. "Then swear upon the Holy Artifact."

As he was saying this, he bent down to lift the silver suitcase by his foot.

Holy Artifact? The Holy Artifact that earned you the title of the Goddess's Sword? Klein looked at the actions of the deacon curiously.

Crestet placed the suitcase on his knees, his dark green eyes instantly turning black.

He lifted his hand then pressed down. The cover of the silver suitcase which resembled a violin case suddenly dissolved and receded like the tide.

At the same time, Klein felt that the light around him was being drawn forward as if it was being absorbed by the suitcase.

Apart from the lights from the classic lamps that lined the walls, as well as the silver splendor that spiraled within the suitcase, the alchemy room turned pitch dark. The scene looked extremely strange.

Pa!

WIth a crisp snapping sound, Crestet Cesimir opened the suitcase, revealing the pure white bone sword that lay within.

Yes, a bone sword. The moment Klein saw the sword, he knew instinctively that it was mainly made out of bone!

The short sword silently released a pure white glow in the pitch dark alchemy room, as if it were a moon hanging high in the night sky, or a lighthouse in the middle of a storm.

It looked as though the sword had no defects on its surface, but a closer examination would reveal that the surface of the sword was laced with layers of symbols and icons. These mysterious patterns intertwined to form the body of the sword.

Klein observed the holy sword, suddenly realizing that he couldn't look away!

His vision was being drawn towards the sword as his brown eyes slowly lost their luster.

Crestet lifted the suitcase, moving the sword away from its original position.

Klein instantly snapped out of his trance and finally freed himself from the nightmare he couldn't escape before.

He cast his gaze to the side and asked gravely, "Reverend, do you need me to put my hand on the holy sword?"

"Yes, come over." Crestet's voice was melodious as if he was singing a lullaby.

Klein stood up, still looking to the side as he took small steps forward. As it was dark, he couldn't see where the legs of the deacon were, nor his old leather boots.

"Stop," Crestet spoke calmly.

Klein immediately halted and stood on the spot. He took a quick glance at the pure white bone sword through the corner of his eyes before retracting his gaze again, in fear.

With that mere glance, he bent down and extended his right hand, accurately placing it atop the holy sword.

A cold feeling swept through his skin and into his mind. The distracting thoughts and feelings of worry instantly eased, as if he was sitting on a roof in a noisy village, smelling the scent of the harvest and admiring the cosmos.

"Recite after me," Crestet said solemnly.

"Alright." Klein nodded.

He then heard the deacon speak in Hermes.

"Standing higher than the cosmos and more eternal than eternity, the Evernight Goddess.

"I swear to you in my real name and my spirituality.

"I, Klein, will never reveal the details of the 'acting method' to those who do not know of it from this moment forth.

"If I go against this, I shall accept any punishment you deem fit.

"Please witness my oath."

Klein collected himself and made the oath in Hermes, following Deacon Cesimir's lead.

He had the faint feeling that a connection has been established between him and a faraway being through the pure white bone sword.

After retracting his right hand, he drew a crimson moon on his chest.

"Praise the Lady!"

"Praise the Lady!" Crestet smiled and bowed in response.

Immediately, he closed the cover of the suitcase and pressed down heavily with his right hand.

The darkness was instantly lit up as the light from the lamp once again filled the entire room.

Klein noticed that the black eyes of Deacon Cesimir had regained their usual blackish-green.

He made his way back to his chair and frowned. He asked in puzzlement, "Acting method?"

Crestet cleared his throat. Without answering the question directly, he instead smiled and said, "You might feel a little confused and not understand what I'm about to tell you, but I cannot explain why that is so, for that involves the secrets of the Church."

You will only have the right to know after you become an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon... Klein looked at Cesimir and added inwardly before Cesimir could say it.

"You will only be permitted to know after you become a core member of the Church, such as an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon," Crestet emphasized.

Klein nodded sternly.

Crestet placed the silver suitcase back beside his foot and crossed his legs.

"In the long history of time, the Church has had generations upon generations of genius Beyonders slowly figuring out a way to avoid losing control.

"And the core to this method is the name of the potion. It's not only critical; it's also the key."

After looking at Klein's thoughtful expression, Crestet continued, "We have realized that the names of the potions all point to a certain group, and this group has their own approach and operates in unique ways. In simpler terms, there are a set of rules that come with the name of the potion, different rules for different potions. When we follow these rules strictly, the risk of losing control is reduced to a minimum."

"Similar to my set of Seer principles?" Klein took the opportunity to ask.

This explanation isn't as simple or understandable as the one I gave to Justice and Hanged Man... Klein silently criticized.

"Yes." Crestet gave an affirmative answer. "When we follow the rules of the potion, we become more and more like the group described by the name of the potion. In other words, we are acting as the job that the name of the potion points us toward. That is the 'acting method.' You must remember, the

spirituality of every individual is special, unique. Even though the core rules must be followed by the people who consume the same potion, there are always certain variations to the rules that are unique to the individual. Thus, the experiences of others can only serve as a guide."

That is a point that I didn't realize... Klein said sincerely, "Thank you for informing me. I will remember that." Crestet laughed.

"These are the experiences accumulated over the generations.

"After using the 'acting method,' we not only gain mastery over the potion, we're also digesting it, just as we would our food. When you truly digest the potion, you will feel a unique, mysterious sensation, understood?"

"I understand. 'Digestion,' this term is very appropriate..." Klein pretended to be deep in thought.

After Crestet explained the method in more detail, Klein weighed his words as he asked, "Reverend Cesimir, since the name of the potion is not only the core, but also the key, then how did the first Beyonders obtain them? I heard that it was recorded on the Blasphemy Slate?"

"Yes, that is correct," Crestet replied frankly. "But the Blasphemy Slate was inscribed with the ancient names. The names of the potions which we use today were derived in part from divine revelations. Some were also consolidated by the experiences of the Beyonders themselves."

Klein nodded slowly. He pursed his lips and asked, "Reverend Cesimir, since the 'acting method' is so effective, why wouldn't the Church tell every Nighthawk about it?"

"I have said that it is a secret of the Church. You will understand the reason behind it once you become an archbishop or a highranking deacon," Crestet answered, unfazed. "Alright, return upstairs and tell the rest of the Nighthawks to come down one at a time. I have to carry out the final step of the examination."

That's to keep Frye and the others from divulging the 'acting method'? Klein thought as he stood up, he then bade farewell, following the Nighthawks' etiquette.

He made his way past the corridor and up the stairs, returning to the Blackthorn Security Company. He saw Dunn smoking his pipe near the entrance of the basement.

With a smile, Klein took the initiative to say, "There shouldn't be any more problems; His Grace wants me to inform Frye and the others to head down for a conversation with him."

"Yes, that is the last step. That means that there were no problems." Dunn put away his pipe and headed to the recreation room to tell the rest.

As he watched Frye and Seeka enter the basement, Klein suddenly recalled something. He said in a hurry, "Captain, are we going to have to get Royale who's guarding over Chanis Gate, and Leonard who's watching over the asylum? Oh, and Kenley, who's on break."

Dunn froze and pinched his forehead.

"I forgot..."

He paused for a moment, then chortled. "But the matter shouldn't be too complicated. One of the advantages of having a high-ranking deacon examine you is that there's no need to send a telegraph to the Holy Cathedral, or engage in a cumbersome exchange of letters. He can make the decision on the spot and hand the formula to the Clown potion as well as the main ingredients to you."

"That's not too bad." Klein couldn't contain his excitement.

...

An hour and a half passed. As Kenley walked out of the alchemy room, his expression full of puzzlement, Klein was once again called downstairs. He met the high-ranking deacon once again, the Goddess's Sword, Crestet Cesimir, a second time.

This time, the golden-brown-haired and blackish-green-eyed deacon wasn't seated. He stood there, allowing the breeze in the basement to blow at his black trench coat.

Crestet's collars stood tall, hiding his chin in the shadows.

He looked at Klein and smiled.

"Nighthawk Klein Moretti, I announce in the name of the Goddess that you have passed the examination of the Holy Cathedral.

"Congratulations. With your contributions, you can immediately advance to become a Sequence 8 Beyonder!"

Phew, I finally passed... I passed it just like that...

When Klein heard Crestet Cesimir's announcement, he let out a breath of relief despite being mentally prepared for it. It felt surreal, as though it was a dream.

He had assumed that the examination would be tougher and lengthier, but when he thought carefully about it, he realized that what had just happened was what should've happened. If he had taken the normal three years to digest the Seer potion instead of doing it in a month, the examination wouldn't have even been conducted by the Holy Cathedral. The Tingen Nighthawks' captain would've been responsible for it instead.

I thought they would investigate my family and friends... Hmm, perhaps Cesimir arrived in Tingen two days ago and completed that in secret... I also thought that the examination would require me to complete some task. Heh, I was really overthinking it. The goal of the examination is merely to determine the level of digestion for the potion, as well as detect any latent dangers, and see whether I'm aware of the "acting method" and if I shared my experience with others... These thoughts flew past Klein's mind. He flashed a sincere smile.

"Thank you, Your Grace. Praise the Lady!"

Crestet nodded gently and said, "To advance is to serve the Goddess better, so that you can protect our fellow believers better. You must remember this—trust me—it'll help you fight the temptation of losing control."

"Temptation..." Klein ruminated over the word.

Crestet sized Klein up with his green eyes and said sternly, "The 'acting method' can help you digest the potion and lower the risk of losing control, but it's not the be-all and end-all. To a certain extent, you can even confuse playing the role and your own existence. You know, there are many actors in the theater that develop severe psychological issues. At a certain level, you might really go insane."

Remember that you're only acting... The only point of note concluded by the City of Silver is identical to what Deacon Cesimir said... Klein nodded thoughtfully in agreement.

"In addition," Crestet emphasized, "Not only is losing control related to the potion, it's also closely related to your emotions and mental health. The most important thing for a Beyonder is to control yourself. Only then will you be able to withstand the temptations of evil gods and devils, resisting emotions like greed and jealousy, and the erosion of desire. Of course, I don't mean that you should get rid of all your emotions and desires, because that is something that no human or even demigod can do. Yes, perhaps only some special Sequences are able to achieve that sort of state."

Klein suddenly thought about Old Neil. He couldn't help but ask in reply, "We must keep our emotions and desires at a reasonable level, and not allowing them to drive us to do something irrational and abnormal?" Crestet nodded solemnly.

"Yes."

After he answered, there were wrinkles at the corner of his eyes. "That's all I wanted to warn you about. Now, I'll pass you the Clown potion formula and the relevant ingredients."

He bent down and put his silver suitcase on the long table. He then turned around and moved a few steps, blocking Klein's view.

When the surrounding lights strangely vanished again, Klein suddenly understood that the formula and ingredients were in the suitcase that stored the holy artifact. It was simply because his gaze was attracted by the pure white bone sword which was why he didn't notice or perhaps, he couldn't notice, the other items in the suitcase.

After a few minutes, the light of the gas lamps lit up the alchemy room again. Crestet picked up his suitcase and moved away, presenting the items on the long table to Klein.

Among them, the most eye-catching item was the palm-sized gray goat horn. It looked like a miniature version of a normal goat horn and was crystal clear, swirling with colors. There were faint layers of unique patterns.

Next to the goat horn was a blue rose. There were red veins on the petals that connecting them together. It seemed to form a human face with a smile.

Hahaha, woowoowoo, hahaha, woowoowoo... Klein heard illusory laughter and crying diffused with each other, and he saw pieces of gray halos floating in midair.

A crystal of the single horn of a matured Hornacis gray mountain goat and a complete stalk of a human-faced rose. The main ingredients of the Clown potion! He nodded indiscernibly and took a few steps towards the long table.

"80 milliliters of pure water, 5 drops of tornapple juice, 7 grams of black-rimmed sunflower powder, 10 grams of golden cloak grass powder, 3 drops of poison hemlock..." Klein looked at the unfurled goatskin parchment and compared the written content with the formula that he had memorized.

After he confirmed that there was nothing wrong, he recalled the demonstration Old Neil did.

He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly to collect his emotions. With the apparatus in the alchemy room, he distilled some pure water needed by the potion.

In the potion formula, pure water referred to water that was distilled over and over again.

Then, he washed a black metal pot and threw in the supplementary ingredients one after another. He was as skillful as back when he had done chemistry experiments in high school.

As the Beyonder ingredients hadn't catalyzed just yet, he didn't see any obvious changes in the liquid in the metal pot. At most, he only saw powder floating on the surface of the liquid.

When he was done with the preparations, Klein cast his gaze at the two main ingredients and gratefully thought, *There's no description of the exact size or weight of the required gray mountain goat's single horn crystal or the human-faced rose. Perhaps a whole horn and a complete rose have no differences, regardless of their weight, allowing them to meet the requirements... Yes, in the world of mysterious Beyonders, this is definitely possible...*

If so, I don't have to worry about putting in excessive amounts of the main ingredients!

After a few seconds, Klein picked up the human-faced rose and threw it into the metal pot.

When the strange flower touched the liquid, it immediately produced a sizzling sound. The surrounding illusory laughter became shrill.

Hahaha, hahaha!

Klein didn't delay any further as he immediately grabbed the crystalline mountain goat horn and threw it into the metal pot.

Poof!

The terrifying laughter disappeared all of a sudden, and the surrounding gray halos slowly converged into the metal pot.

Klein lowered his head and saw the liquid in the pot was colored in a mix of gold, yellow, and red. However, the three colors remained extremely distinct at their boundaries.

There were bubbles churning and fizzing from the liquid, but they failed to escape from the pot and ended up bursting silently.

The scene reminded Klein of Sprite, the carbonated drink from his previous incarnation.

This actually looks like a delicious drink... A thought popped into his head that aligned with the characteristics of his culture.

Suppressing his nervousness, excitement, and anticipation, Klein poured the liquid from the black metal pot into a glass bottle.

What shocked him was that there wasn't a single bit of the potion left in the metal pot.

It really is a potion that turns people into Beyonders... Klein raised his right hand, and he looked at the beautiful-looking tricolored liquid.

Crestet Cesimir, who had been silent the entire time, suddenly smiled and said, "Don't worry. At the very least, I didn't notice any problems with the concoction of your potion.

"I've been waiting here to ensure that no accidents happen after you consume the potion. Don't worry, as long as it isn't anything serious, I should be able to save you."

Okay. Klein nodded and placed the Clown potion back onto the long table.

Then, he took off the silver chain inside his sleeve and let the topaz pendant hang down naturally, a slight distance above the liquid.

To Beyonders of any other occupation, pendulum divinations could only divine a yes or no answer. Of course, when there wasn't enough information, the divination wouldn't yield any useful answers at all. When the pendulum didn't spin, it was called a failed divination.

As a Seer, Klein's pendulum could also vaguely determine the degree of the "yes" or "no" answer.

Klein's eyes grew dark as he recited, "This potion is harmful.

"This potion is harmful."

...

Seven times later, he opened his half-closed eyes and saw the topaz pendant spinning clockwise, but very slowly.

Clockwise means a positive response. In other words, it means that the potion is harmful... However, it spins slowly, which means that it's only slightly harmful... Yes, potions can bring about a loss of control, so there's the possibility of harm. A low level of harm means there is nothing wrong with the potion... Klein let out a breath of relief and wound the pendulum on his left wrist before covering it with his sleeve.

At that moment, Crestet couldn't help but sigh.

"...You really are a professional Seer."

"I must fully utilize my advantage, but I can't rely on it too much and think that it's all-powerful," Klein replied softly and took up the Clown potion bottle.

After drinking it, I'll become a Sequence 8 Beyonder...

The thought flashed in his mind and Klein didn't hesitate. He raised the bottle, tipped his head, and gulped down the potion.

Bitter! So bitter!

It sucks, totally!

He instantly realized what it meant to look good on the outside, but rotten on the inside. His face had contorted as a result of the potion. He wanted to puke, but he couldn't.

Then, Klein realized that his face was flushed red. As for the rest of his body, they were experiencing a similar reaction.

He was convinced that he looked like a steamed lobster. As for his spirit and mind, they felt like they had been extracted into a thin needle, fusing with the potion, drop by drop, as it stabbed into each and every one of cells.

It was a feeling that needed no microscope to observe his cells. Klein stood there and "saw" the intruder invade his body's most minute areas.

For a few seconds, he felt like a robot that was having its parts and electrical circuits swapped out.

After an unknown period of time had passed, his mind reflected his figure, as though he was listening to himself singing through his own ears.

Due to this strange projection, Klein discovered that he could precisely control his facial and bodily motions.

Meanwhile, his ears buzzed. He heard the murmurs and shouting echoing around him which had not happened in a while.

Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea...

Phew. Klein imagined the layered spherical light and slowly entered a Cogitation state. Bit by bit, he escaped from the state of having his spirituality seep out where he had a slight loss of control.

At that moment, he knew that he had advanced successfully. He knew that he was a Sequence 8 Clown.

After the color in Klein's eyes went back to normal, Crestet Cesimir said with a laugh, "You can move about and try to get used to the changes in your body. Try to find the core powers that were given to you by the Clown potion."

Klein nodded. He considered the fact that he might need guidance from the deacon and thus didn't care about his presence. He repeatedly followed what he had been practicing all this time as he took a step forward. He twisted his hips and threw a punch forward, launching a frontal jab.

Pa!

He heard the crisp sound of his fist breaking the air. The power in the forward thrust exceeded his expectations.

In that instant, he felt as though he was sitting in a carriage which had abruptly hit the brakes. He lost his balance and fell forward.

Oh no! This is about to become an embarrassing story—just like Leonard's... Klein mused. But at that moment, he noticed that he could still effectively control his muscles, his body, as well as his center of gravity!

He simultaneously exerted force with his spine, tendons, and ligaments, instantly adjusting his center of mass and managing to stand firm despite his distorted posture.

Well... Upon gaining some understanding of this, Klein attempted several other actions. He confirmed that the biggest change in his body was the massive increase in coordination. He would no longer lose his balance unless there were some extenuating circumstances.

I feel like a roly-poly tumbler... I can even act in a circus now! It wouldn't be too hard for me to walk on a rope... The Clown potion sure lives up to its name... Many thoughts flashed through his mind. Klein once again tested the extent of the improvements to his strength, agility, and speed.

Hmm, I should be around the same level as Teacher Gawain. After I get used to this and go through the specialized training, I'll definitely become more powerful... Also, with my current mastery over my body, it would be easy for me to grasp combat techniques. Klein stopped moving and nodded in thought.

According to his plans, he estimated that he would become decent in combat arts only after half a year. But after consuming the Clown potion, he felt that it would only take a month, perhaps two or three weeks, before he could qualify as a policeman that was adept in combat.

That was the difference between an average person and a Beyonder.

In a sense, the talents of Beyonders were beyond the reach of normal humans!

Crestet watched silently as the newly advanced Clown tried out various actions before completely stopping. He then nodded.

"It truly is a potion adept in the field of combat."

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he asked, "What sounds did you hear just now?"

"I heard someone muttering Hornacis." Klein wanted to keep the term Flegrea a secret for the time being.

He wanted to observe the reaction of Deacon Cesimir. If he was willing to relay information regarding the Hornacis mountain range and the Nation of the Evernight, Klein would then add on, saying that he heard something different again.

Crestet nodded slightly, skipping over the topic. He reminded Klein, "Remember, a High-Sequence Beyonder can influence corresponding Low-Sequence Beyonders of the same Sequence pathway to a

certain extent. In a way, some parts of the respective pathways contain the Realm of Demigods. The murmurings and howls might have been intentionally conveyed to you by them. They might be filled with malicious intent.

"You must be even more cautious if the Sequence pathway belongs to an evil god. I had a chat with Dunn just now. The Nighthawk in your team who lost control recently met with such a situation."

Old Neil... The Hidden Sage... Klein's expression darkened. He nodded solemnly and said, "Reverend Cesimir, I will remember this. I will not be tempted by the murmurings or howls. I will not be corrupted by them."

At the same time, he thought of something else.

Could this be the reason why the Church only provides the pathways for Sleepless and Corpse Collector, while hiding a large number of the other pathways? After all, the Sleepless pathway belongs to the Evernight Goddess, and Death which corresponds to the Corpse Collector pathway has already fallen... As for why the Church would still offer the Mystery Pryer and Seer, it's because these two jobs are of a support type and can fill the shortcomings of the Sequence 9 and 8 pathways for Sleepless and Corpse Collector. Furthermore, they're only at the beginning of the pathway, so the influence they can gather wouldn't be too prominent...

But this doesn't explain why they would hide the names and unique traits of the potions... or the lack of information as to what one should take note of when facing them...

Klein retracted his thoughts when he saw Crestet Cesimir pick up his suitcase to leave. He adopted a curious tone.

"Reverend Cesimir, I would like to know how to act as a Clown. Do I have to go to a circus?"

Crestet smoothed his tall collar and chuckled.

"According to our current understanding of philosophy, you just made the mistake of formalism.

"You need to understand that the name of a potion not only represents a job. It also represents a group of people that share certain traits. For example, we can also describe Seers differently. We can call them people who can see fate, yet remain respectful of fate. Of course, as I mentioned before, there are some differences to the rules concluded by each individual even if they consumed the same potion. You cannot completely reference the experiences of another person, do you understand?"

Klein nodded in thought.

"I think I can understand some of it. I can act as a Clown in my daily life, as long as I have grasped its essence?"

"In theory," Crestet answered, being careful about his choice of words.

"...I understand." Klein drew a crimson moon on his chest. "Thank you, Reverend Cesimir. May the Goddess bless you."

Hmm, just what is the essence of a Clown? If I don't take into consideration what a clown represents back on Earth and only think about what it means in this world, a clown is a job that entertains people using ridiculous methods. For example, hilarious getups, exaggerated actions, trickster-like performances? The core is that it must be ridiculous, and it must entertain others. It feels a little off... Must I consider it from the perspective of court jesters from ancient times? Klein thought about it silently as he felt at a loss.

Crestet looked at him and also drew a crimson moon before his chest.

He smiled, revealing the wrinkles at the corner of his eyes.

"May the Goddess bless you too."

At that moment, Klein suddenly perceived something, an intuition that felt like a prediction, that Deacon Cesimir would put his left foot forward!

He then saw Crestet pick up the silver suitcase and step toward the entrance of the alchemy room with his left foot!

One step, two steps, three steps. Klein watched as Crestet walked out of the hidden door, his figure vanishing into the corridor.

This... He was dazed for a moment before he felt intense excitement.

The Beyonder powers of the Clown potion were more powerful than he imagined!

He could intuitively predict a person's next course of action!

Was the combination of this ability, coupled with his powerful coordination, exceptional agility, and speed, as well as decent strength, considered being good at fighting with artifice? Klein thought about this revelation.

So, this can be considered the manifestation of the Seer's abilities in Sequence 8, but it's not enough... This pathway must be one that gives a unique ability every time I advance before reaching a High-Sequence Beyonder. But the intuitions I get are fleeting, so I don't think I can take advantage of them every single time. Of course, this ability is powerful enough as it is. Taking advantage of it once should be enough to turn defeat into victory... Oh right, after I reduce the influence of the negative effects that come with the Clown potion, I can try the ritual to summon myself. I nearly forgot about that... Yeah, the Captain must have infected me with his awful memory!

In the midst of his thoughts, Klein observed himself once again. He wanted to see if the Clown potion had brought along any other abilities.

According to the confidential records of the Nighthawks, if the potion would allow the person who consumed it to gain mastery over a certain spell, the person would be able to faintly detect what kinds of spells he obtained after advancing as if he was being instilled with knowledge.

But I don't sense any of that. In other words, Clown doesn't come with the ability to quickly cast spells, as reported in the confidential records of the Nighthawks... Could the meaning of "crafty" be that I can now effectively use my expressions and body language to more easily fool people with my lies? Klein stretched his neck while seriously analyzing his current condition.

At this moment, he couldn't help but think back to the suited clown he had encountered previously. The clown's peculiar and varied spells had left a deep impression.

Hmm, that member of the Secret Order is probably a Sequence 7 Beyonder. His clown getup was purely to mask his facial features to avoid being placed on a wanted list... It's no wonder that he could hold his own against two Sequence 7s and a Sequence 8... If he had deciphered the fact that I wasn't under the influence of Sealed Artifact 2-049 and avoided falling under its control, ten of me might not have been enough to deal with him.

Of course, Clown is not completely devoid of spells. There are still spells like these...

Klein walked toward the long table and picked up the piece of paper that the Clown formula was written on.

His pupils darkened and with a flick of his wrist, he tossed the piece of paper into the air.

Pa!

It was as if the soft piece of paper had become a dagger, and it pierced itself into the wall of the alchemy room!

I can bring a deck of tarot cards with me in the future. They can be used both for divination or as weapons. Klein collected himself and started to pack up the objects left behind from the potion's concoction.

After dealing with this and burning the formula for the potion, Klein exhaled and left the alchemy room, closing the secret door behind him.

For the time being, he didn't feel like trying to entertain others through ridiculous methods because of what happened to Old Neil. He intended to lessen the influence of the potion through Cogitation first.

Phew, this is going to be a brand new experience again... No matter what happens, I'm no longer just a supporting member... Yes, ever since Old Neil passed away, I'm the only one left in the Tingen Nighthawks team that can provide support. The Holy Cathedral will most likely send a Mystery Pryer or a Seer to the team... Klein followed the wall lamps, walking down the dark corridor, and calmly made his way up the stairs leading to the Blackthorn Security Company.

He then saw the sunlight in the Nighthawks' recreation room.

The sunlight shone in through the oriel window, sunlight which was pure and warm.

Klein turned towards the Captain's office and saw that the door was wide open. Dunn Smith was leaning back in his chair, sniffing at his pipe.

When Dunn swept his gray eyes at him, he changed his seating posture.

"You seem to be in good shape, nothing like someone who had just consumed a potion."

"This might be the advantage of fully digesting a potion before leveling up." Klein closed the door behind him and took a seat.

He and Dunn both knew about the "acting method," so their oath didn't keep them from talking about the "acting method" with each other. They could exchange their thoughts about it, but the two of them didn't bring it up with a tacit understanding. They fell silent at the same time after the exchange.

Klein thought and asked, "Has His Grace left?"

"Yes, as a high-ranking deacon, he has other matters to take care of." Dunn thought for a moment. "Oh, he took the pair of red eyeballs that remained after Old Neil died." Klein was shocked and confused.

"Why?"

Dunn picked up his coffee and took a sip. He answered after a long silence, "We shouldn't lie to ourselves. A Rampager is in fact already a monster, and as I told you before, monsters leave behind things that are rich with Beyonder powers after they die. When these relics can't be controlled, they have to be sealed. Yes, that is one of the most common origins of Sealed Artifacts. According to the Nighthawks' internal rules, the items left behind by Rampagers need to be stored elsewhere, so that they won't trigger their partners."

"A logical rule." Klein nodded heavily.

Suddenly, he sharply noticed that the Captain had missed out something. So, he asked curiously, "What if the item left behind is controllable?"

Dunn looked at him, his gray eyes were deep like a quiet night.

He sighed and said, "You wouldn't want to know the answer."

Klein was taken aback before he suddenly realized a possibility.

Normal monsters left behind Beyonder ingredients which could be used to make potions.

But what of a Rampager who turned into a monster?

If they left behind controllable items, would those things be used as Beyonder ingredients?

Upon realizing that, Klein suddenly felt a strong sense of disgust. He couldn't help but turn his head to retch. Even his sight suddenly grew blurry.

This is such a terrifying theory... But it's an answer that's highly likely of being closer to the truth! In that instant, he had a deeper understanding of sayings like "To fight against the abyss, we have to endure the corruption of the abyss," and "We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness."

Would this be one of the reasons why the Church hides the "acting method"? So that they can recycle a certain number of their own members for spare parts? But this will make members of the upper echelons reject the Church... Klein's face clearly reflected his changing expressions.

Upon seeing his response, Dunn suddenly laughed. There was a twinkling light in his gray eyes.

“Think about it on the brighter side of things, you can think of it as our teammates watching over us in a different form. They will be with us forever.”

After saying that, Dunn lowered his head, picked up his coffee, and brought it to his mouth.

After nearly twenty seconds of silence, he lifted his head and said, “And you don’t have to worry. As long as we can find sources of Beyonder ingredients, we wouldn’t do what you were thinking about.

“Alright, according to the rules, you’ll receive a day off since you just advanced. You can decide whether or not you want to go to your combat training this afternoon, but you have to inform Gawain either way.”

Klein gently nodded. Taking a deep breath, he straightened his back and said, “Captain, I have finished my lessons on mysticism. I’d like to use my mornings to learn techniques such as tracking and monitoring.”

He paused and added with a serious expression, “I’d like to fulfill my full duty as a Nighthawk soon.”

Dunn gave him a piercing look and sighed.

“You’re tougher than I imagined. As you wish.”

“Yes, Captain!” Klein suddenly stood up and drew a crimson moon on his chest.

...

After leaving the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein didn’t return home to rest, but instead, took the opportunity to take a trackless carriage to Azik’s place.

Ding dong, ding dong.

As the doorbell rang clearly, Azik opened the door in a white shirt and black vest.

There was a gold watch chain hanging from his vest pocket.

“Don’t you need to work?” Azik took a glance at the sky and realized that the sun had yet to climb to its peak.

“I actually have most of the day off due to some special circumstances,” Klein explained vaguely.

Azik looked at him and appeared to notice something as he nodded and made way for Klein’s entry.

At the hallway, Klein set his cane aside, took off his hat, and followed Azik to the living room.

The living room was comfortably furnished with a fireplace, rocking chair, couches, and a coffee table. Klein sat at his usual spot.

Azik sat down opposite Klein and pointed at the cigars on the coffee table.

“Do you want one?”

“No.” Klein shook his head firmly.

Azik didn’t attempt to persuade him as he struck a match and lit one of the cigars. At the same time, he asked casually, “Have you taken care of the matter at Morse Town?”

“I have to thank you for that,” Klein replied sincerely.

At the same time, he secretly lampooned, *Mr. Azik, before you lost your memories, you definitely must’ve left behind quite a sizable wealth for yourself. Otherwise, how could a teacher who isn’t even an associate professor be able to enjoy cigars so frequently?*

As Azik was fiddling with his cigar, Klein brought up a matter.

“Mr. Azik, I have something to ask you.”

“What is it?” Azik replied without lifting his head.

Klein paused and organized his words.

"One of my colleagues lost control and became a monster. I'd like to know if his spirit was contaminated?"

He wasn't certain if Mr. Azik knew the meaning of "losing control," so he prepared an explanation, just in case.

Azik stopped what he was doing and lifted his head to look at Klein. He nodded heavily and said, "No doubt. You have to be very careful in a situation like that. If he lost control due to the temptation of an evil god or devil, try to avoid contacting his spirit. It might very likely lead to life-threatening danger."

"I understand." Klein let out a breath of disappointment.

When he was at Old Neil's place, he was too emotional and had forgotten to contact Old Neil's spirit. Neither did Dunn Smith remind him at all. Hence, he missed the opportunity entirely.

Now that I think of it, Captain didn't forget but intentionally avoided bringing it up... Klein was silent in thought.

He didn't dwell on the topic and instead mentioned his previous encounter.

"Mr. Azik, I tried to divine the origins of Morse Town's paranormal incidents. I ended up seeing an upside-down pyramid that extended underground. My teammate told me that it's a symbol of Death. Only His descendants would receive such an honor."

Azik put down the match and took up the cigar cutter when he suddenly fell into a daze. He was motionless for quite a while.

He leaned back into his seat and wore an unusually gloomy expression.

After a while, he said in a deep voice, "This gives me a very familiar feeling, but I don't seem to be recalling anything." "I'm very sorry." Klein sighed sincerely.

He had imagined that he could use the revelation obtained from his divination to further jolt Mr. Azik's memories.

Azik cut off the cigar cap, shook his head, and smiled bitterly.

"If it was something that could be recalled easily, I think I would've long found a way to escape my fate. Of course, I have to thank you for your kindness. Thank you for remembering about me this entire time."

He thought for a moment before adding, "Oh, and I'll be leaving Tingen in the near future."

"Why?" Klein asked in surprise.

Didn't we say that we were going to find the manipulator behind the scenes, the person who affected my fate, and stole your child's skull?

Azik held his cigar and sighed before explaining, "The target might've noticed my attention and investigation. He hasn't been taking any action recently, leaving me with no clues. Thus, I'm thinking of leaving Tingen for the time being and going to Backlund. On one hand, I can take the opportunity to search for traces that I left behind before I lost my memories. On the other hand, my absence might let the target lower his guard."

That's right. Mr. Azik's last memory loss was around Backlund University. It's a pity that you can't take my place, searching for the red chimney house... Klein nodded solemnly and said,

“I’ll pay close attention to this. Once the target takes action and exposes himself, I’ll inform you immediately.

“Hmm. Mr. Azik, how will I inform you of things in a timely manner?”

Klein had the idea that if Azik was Death’s descendant, or if he was linked to Death in a certain way, his powers would have been something similar to the Corpse Collector Sequence. He definitely had a way to call something like Daly’s messenger.

In other words, this could confirm if Azik was actually related to Death or a descendant of Death.

Azik took a puff of his cigar and thought for nearly twenty seconds. He took out an ornament from his left sleeve.

It was an intricate but old copper whistle. There were many unique patterns that filled it with a mysterious aura.

“This is something that I had with me when I woke up in Backlund. When you blow it, you’ll summon a messenger that belongs to me.” Azik held the copper whistle as he explained in detail.

After so many years, this copper whistle can still be used? This should be a mystical item, right? Klein was surprised and delighted that he had indirectly proved that Mr. Azik was related to Death.

Azik gave Klein a glance, then he put the copper whistle to his mouth and demonstrated.

His cheeks puffed up as he blew with all his might.

Nothing was heard, but Klein felt a sudden gloominess and coldness.

He quickly tapped his left molar and saw that there were blurry white bones being thrown up from the ground, one after another, forming a strange fountain.

After a few seconds, there was an illusory monster in the living room.

Its body was made of white bones, and there were dark flames glowing in its eye sockets. It was almost four meters tall, and it towered over Klein, who wasn’t even 175cm tall.

As he watched its head nearly tear through the ceiling, Klein suddenly had a thought, *Mr. Azik, isn’t your messenger a little... too exaggerated?*

Azik didn’t share those thoughts at all. He smiled and said, “After you pass the letter to it, blow the whistle again to end the summoning. Then, it’ll send the letter to me very quickly, in a secretive manner.”

After that, Azik shook his wrist and threw the old copper whistle across the room.

Klein extended his right hand and accurately caught it. He found it cold but mild.

Thank you Clown potion... He breathed a sigh of relief. He wiped the whistle and blew it hard.

Silently, the huge messenger fell apart as blurry white bones sank underground.

...

The Tussock River ran through Backlund and harbors that dotted around the area.

Alger Wilson wore the long priest robes of the Church of Storms as he walked down from the passenger ship slowly.

He saw people walking to and fro around the harbor with countless port workers sweating under the sun. It was a bustling yet noisy scene.

“It’s been a while, Backlund,” Alger muttered to himself.

After leaving Azik's house, Klein took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

As he opened the door to his house, he suddenly saw a figure sitting in his dining room.

Klein instinctively tightened his grip on the cane in his hand, but quickly realized what was going on. It wasn't a thief, but his maid, Bella.

Bella was focused on reading a spread-out newspaper on the table. She jumped in shock when she heard the door open, quickly standing up and stammering, "I-I was just done with the tasks for the morning. I was w-waiting for the water to boil so that I could eat some bread."

I'm still not really used to having a maid in the house... Klein mocked himself. He took off his hat and nodded.

"Reading is a good habit. To be able to persist in reading, despite the busy workload, is something that's encouraged by the Goddess."

He used the name of the Goddess just in case Bella took his compliment as sarcasm.

But in reality, only the God of Knowledge and Wisdom would place this much emphasis on reading... Of course, all of the Churches advocate education... Yes, since she's about 18 years old and believes in the Goddess, Bella's love for reading must be influenced by her parents. Parents like this would send their daughter to receive an education as long as they can afford it. Even if they cannot afford public schools, there are always the free schools provided by the Church. At most, it would just delay her education... Thus, Bella isn't illiterate. She can understand words and read the newspaper... Klein thought as he walked into the living room after setting his cane down.

He had quite a good impression of Bella.

Even though she was a little clumsy and obviously not used to the kitchen, she had shown a willingness to learn.

Bella let her hands hang down and said, embarrassed, "I didn't have the opportunity to read many newspapers in the past. The landlord didn't let us use old newspapers to clean the walls... I stole a glance at it when I picked up the newspapers just now to clean the coffee table. I thought that-that it was rather interesting."

What a pitiful lady. When I transmigrated, newspapers were the least interesting of things... Klein thought as he lampooned. He smiled and took out the silver pocket watch from his pocket. After looking at the time, he said, "As long as you complete your tasks and do them well, you are free to do whatever you want with the rest of your time. You don't need to be too nervous. Of course, if I'm having a chat with Benson and Melissa, it's best that you stay in your room. I will allow you to use the lamp inside and take a few old newspapers with you."

"Oh, please knock at my door at one in the afternoon, then prepare a cup of Sibe black tea, two pieces of soft white bread, a piece of wheat toast, and a small plate of butter for me."

In order to celebrate his advancement to Sequence 8, Klein decided to spoil himself slightly. He was going to eat the white bread ahead of Benson who was planning on having it over the weekend.

Well, I'll buy eight more pounds of bread soon. In the future, we shall make the change in our staple dish, from wheat bread to white bread! As a Sequence 8 Beyonder, my weekly pay is definitely going to increase... To think that the Captain didn't mention this... He forgot again! Klein froze for a moment and decided to clarify it tomorrow.

"Alright," Bella replied in surprise and joy.

Following that, she asked with a little uncertainty, "Mr. Klein, do you mean the Sibe black tea used to entertain guests?"

She called him by his first name as Moretti could be used to refer to anyone in the family.

“Yes, that shall be my usual tea in the future.” Klein waved his hand and made his way towards the stairs.

He suddenly noticed that he was in a decent financial situation after becoming a Clown.

This was partly because there were no other large expenses for the time being. He only needed to spend two soli on transport while he was investigating the houses with red chimneys, and on the materials that he needed to purchase occasionally. Claims could be made for the latter most of the time anyway.

Also, there was a sum of 300 pounds in Klein’s anonymous bank account. It was important to understand that one are [1] of land in the countryside only cost five to six and a half soli, which was another way of saying that Klein could afford 920 to 1200 ares of farmland, which was equivalent to 137 to 179 mou [2], or 23-30 acres back on Earth. Furthermore, this sum of money could allow Klein to buy a house on Daffodil Street on a contract for 15 years.

If I convert all that money into land, I’ll get between 23 and 31 pounds a year in rent... That’s not bad, but not necessary for the time being. I’ll use that 300 pounds for emergencies... I’ll have to find an opportunity to tell Benson and Melissa about my true weekly salary! Klein thought as he entered his room.

After locking the door to his room, Klein sat on the edge of his bed and started his Cogitation. He wanted to use this method to slowly control the powers seeping out of his potion. He was very careful and very cautious.

He had thought of the term “losing control” very lightly until he saw the Mandated Punisher who had lost control.

Of course, he didn’t know that Mandated Punisher personally. He also didn’t know what had happened to him. He subconsciously thought of him as an anomaly, a rare case.

It was just like how an average person would make comments about a murder they saw on the news before forgetting about it entirely.

But what happened to Old Neil shook Klein greatly. It made him realize very clearly that losing control was always a possibility, always around him. Loss of control might descend upon him in ways he had never thought about!

That sure was a bloody lesson... Klein ended his Cogitation and muttered to himself as he opened his eyes.

He had dreamed of that scene many times in the past few days, jolting awake in the process and finding himself drenched in cold sweat.

He wasn’t only grieving Old Neil’s death, but also worried about his future. If he didn’t have Cogitation to help him sleep, he believed that there would be many sleepless nights in his future.

Other than digesting the potion, I also have to try my best to control my emotions and desires. I have to keep them within reasonable levels and not be consumed by them... Klein exhaled and laid down, quickly falling asleep.

On the day that Old Neil passed away, Dunn’s actions and words had touched him greatly. It made him critically assess the responsibilities of a Nighthawk for the first time. It made him want to take up his responsibilities and help his Captain and teammates.

Thus, he didn’t intend to waste his afternoon. He was going to continue his combat lessons.

...

Three in the afternoon, on a crude training field.

The blond crew-cut Gawain creased his brows as he witnessed Klein slowly familiarize himself with the motions, going from the movements of a decent beginner to the movements of an apprentice knight who had been practicing for a good six months.

All this happened in the short span of forty minutes!

He called for Klein to stop and sized him up. He couldn't help but ask, "What happened?"

Klein had already come up with an excuse. He was prepared to attribute his performance to scientific research when Gawain added, "You don't need to answer if it's inconvenient for you to do so."

It looks like there was some communication between the police department and Gawain... It makes sense; he has to train Beyonders occasionally, so how could he not know? Klein heaved a sigh of relief. He smiled as he said, "Teacher, how long do you think I will need before I can take part in actual combat?"

Gawain crossed his arms and looked at Klein seriously. He replied with a raspy voice, "Two or three days, but that isn't enough!"

He explained, as if in thought, "Being able to take part in actual combat isn't the same as being good at fighting. The latter would take another two to three weeks.

"Furthermore, you need to gain mastery over weapons that you can bring with you, for example, a cane, whips, daggers, and triangular blades!"

...There's still so many to learn? Klein was dumbfounded.

Gawain swept his experienced gaze at him.

"Remember, every drop of sweat you lose here might save your life in the future."

"Yes, Teacher!" Klein pumped himself up and answered.

...

On Sunday morning, Klein entered the Blackthorn Security Company and knocked on the door of the Captain's office.

Dunn Smith looked up as if he was expecting this.

"I forgot to inform you yesterday. Your position at the police department has risen from probationary inspector to inspector now that you have advanced to Sequence 8. I'll get them to issue the appropriate documents and epaulets to you as soon as possible.

"Your weekly salary will also increase from six pounds to ten pounds. The Church and the police department will each bear half of your salary. This salary is the level of an experienced Nighthawk; of course, I mean an experienced Nighthawk at Sequence 9."

...Captain, are you following the wrong script? Klein was taken aback as he listened to the Captain. His eyebrows relaxed as he smiled.

"That's more than I imagined."

He had imagined that his weekly salary would only increase to eight pounds.

Dunn lifted his cup of coffee and took a sip.

"The increase in salary for Nighthawks is firstly dependent on years of service, second on contribution, and third on the level of your job. The third criterion is often highly correlated with your contributions."

Right, without any contributions, even if one were to digest their potion, they would be unable to apply for the formula and materials... Klein nodded while in thought.

A weekly salary of 10 pounds, coupled with any bonuses would mean a yearly salary of about 540 pounds. Since he didn't need to pay any taxes, this salary was fairly high in the middleincome bracket,

just lower than desirable occupations such as esteemed lawyers, famous architects, experienced surgeons, and government workers.

Even the vice president of the Loen Kingdom's treasury only makes 700 pounds a year before tax. That's at most 640 pounds after tax, probably lower... According to the newspapers, a decent house in Backlund and Hillston only costs about 2500 pounds. With Benson, Melissa, and my current expenditure, we could buy one in seven or eight years... To be able to afford a bungalow in the central area of the capital in just seven or eight years purely through my own efforts, this salary makes me happy indeed... Klein got up and bade farewell. He quickly walked to the basement and took his shift at Chanis Gate.

Before it was ten, he suddenly heard someone approaching Chanis Gate.

Soon after, Dunn appeared at the door.

"There's a case that requires your help."

"An incident involving Beyonders?" Klein instinctively asked.

"No, a parliamentary representative of this city, Mr. Maynard, was found dead in his house. The Tingen Police Department is under huge pressure and wants us to use a mediumship ritual to help them pinpoint the murderer. Currently, you are the only person on the team who can do that," Dunn explained. Then he added, "The Holy Cathedral will send over a Mystery Pryer to our team next week. Actually, it should've been done a long time ago, but you happened to join and chose to be a Seer."

---

1. A metric historical unit of measurement, equal to 100 square meters.
2. Chinese unit of land measurement that varies withlocation but is commonly 666.5 square meters.

"How long has the Member of Parliament been dead for?" Klein asked straightforwardly as he packed up his things.

If it was more than fifteen minutes, the information that he could obtain would decline considerably. If it was more than an hour, there would be very little left to find.

If it was more than a month, contact with the spirit of the dead would most likely fail.

"Regrettably, the initial autopsy report shows that Mr. Maynard died between nine and eleven last night." Dunn shook his head and said, "You only need to provide assistance and not consider if you can be of use."

"Alright." Klein took his coat and walked out of the duty room with his hat and cane in hand. Dunn Smith took his place at the Chanis Gate guardroom.

Theoretically, as a Beyonder, as long as one's spirituality was enhanced, things like Spirit Vision, divination, and ritualistic magic could be learned. Especially for Beyonders from the Sleepless Sequence who were known for their high spirituality.

But in actual fact, the differences between the various sequences was vastly obvious. Dunn Smith and Leonard Mitchell had learned Spirit Vision, but they could only see faint white or light blue in the auras of others. They were unable to precisely differentiate the status of different body parts. Of course, they could definitely see spiritual things with Spirit Vision, but doing so wasn't as effective as using their spiritual perception.

That also led to a problem in which Beyonders at the Sleepless, Midnight Poet, and Nightmare Sequences didn't enjoy activating their Spirit Vision.

Similarly, if they were willing to, they could also learn spirit pendulums, dowsing, dream divination, and so on. But their rate of success wasn't something worth noting.

It was the same situation with ritualistic magic as well.

When the two of them walked past one another, Dunn suddenly said, "I forgot to tell you that Inspector Tolle is in charge of the case. He's waiting for you at the reception hall in the security company. Remember to change into your new uniform and grab your new documents."

Klein wasn't surprised and replied with a smile, "New uniform, new documents? The Tingen Police Department sure is efficient." He had just advanced to Sequence 8 the day before...

"It's because this case is very important, so..." Dunn spread his hands and took up Klein's previous spot.

Klein walked upstairs, but he wasn't in a hurry to go to the reception hall. He entered the Nighthawks' break room and entered the attached bathroom to relieve himself. There was only a toilet bowl, a water bottle, and a bucket in the duty room.

Then, he changed into his police uniform that revealed his promotion to two silver stars and put on his peak cap with the "two crossed swords and a crown."

After transferring his Flaring Sun Charm, Azik's copper whistle, his ritual ingredients, and other items, Klein smoothed out his uniform, took his cane, and exited the break room.

He passed through the partition and saw Inspector Tolle seated in the sofa area.

It had been a while since they last met. The tall police officer seemed to have gained some weight, and his stomach was even more outstanding. With his thick mustache and hair, he looked like a brown bear that had just escaped from a circus.

“I’m glad to work with you again.” When Tolle saw that it was a Nighthawk that he knew, he let out a breath of relief. He stood up and extended his bear paw.

No, palm... Klein corrected himself and shook the other person’s hand as a polite gesture.

“Me too.”

Tolle stole a glance at Klein’s two shimmering silver stars shoulder strap and said with envy, “We’re at the same rank now, and it hasn’t even been a month.”

At first, Klein wanted to reply solemnly that “The danger that we encounter is ten times worse than yours,” but he remembered his identity then: Sequence 8 Clown.

Maybe I can give it a try... Using his spirituality, he looked at the reflection of his facial expression. He lifted the corner of his lips and replied with a smile, “Maybe in another few months, you’ll have to call me ‘Sir.’”

“You sure are humorous.” Tolle chuckled and pointed at the door. “Shall we head out?”

“Alright.” Klein hadn’t given up his cane. Now that he had become a Clown, the cane was truly a viable weapon.

After exiting the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein and Tolle walked down side by side, forming a great contrast due to the skinniness and fatness of the two.

“I feel like we could even make an audience at the circus laugh,” Klein suddenly jested.

Tolle nodded in absolute agreement and said, “Yes, I feel our vast contrast brings a comedic effect. Do you know that some circuses are trying to use fat and skinny, tall and short clown combinations in their performances?”

No, actually I meant a beast tamer and a brown bear... Klein, of course, wouldn’t make such a rude remark. He went along with it and replied, “It’s a pity that there are no fixed circuses in Tingen.”

“That’s right, but we have operas, theaters, and music halls,” Inspector Tolle replied wistfully.

They casually chatted until they got onto the police carriage. Then, Klein redirected the topic back to the case.

“Is it confirmed that Mr. Maynard was murdered?”

“We can’t be certain, but his wife and two sons aren’t willing to believe the possibility that he died due to a sudden illness. And there was really something wrong at the scene. When Maynard was found, he was naked on the guestroom’s bed,” Tolle said as he deliberated.

“He sleeps separately from his wife?” Klein leaned back against the carriage wall and mimicked the main character in various detective films.

Tolle shook his head and said, “No, his wife hasn’t been in Tingen recently. She went to Backlund to attend a very important social ball. You might not know, but she’s the leader of a new party. She’s the daughter of someone from the House of Commons. She’s still on her way back to Tingen via steam locomotive. She merely used the telegram to express her opinion on this matter.”

“Maynard is also a member of the new party. He’s been a Tingen’s Member of Parliament for more than ten years. He intended to run for mayor in next year’s election.”

“In other words, his death might be related to this?” Klein asked casually and immediately laughed.

“I’m sorry, I’m only supposed to be helping with the autopsy. The rest of the matter is not within my area of concern, you don’t have to answer.” Tolle didn’t mind much but sighed.

“Autopsy... You’re very cautious.”

“As for your guesses, I would only say that there’s a possibility. There was a gathering last night at Maynard’s place. There were too many guests, and we temporarily can’t find any main suspects. Plus, these guests have decent backgrounds, so we have to be very careful. We can’t make any mistakes.”

“I understand.” Klein nodded faintly and asked about the details of the scene.

Maynard’s house was a bungalow located in the Golden Indus borough. It was surrounded by gardens and fields, there was a stable, a fountain, and a broad pathway built from cement.

Klein put on his peak hat with its police badge and followed behind Inspector Tolle. They passed through the police streamer and entered the double-story house under the gaze of every policeman present.

In the living room, there were two male and four female probationary inspectors who were talking to people individually to gather statements.

Klein looked around and saw many gentlemen in tuxedos and a few ladies in glamorous dresses and checkered gauze hats.

“They’re the guests who spent the night here,” Tolle explained and led Klein up the stairs to the second floor directly.

Along the way, when the police constables who were searching through the rooms saw the two, they revealed a look of respect without stopping them. Perhaps it was the effect of the inspector epaulets.

“This is the guest room where Maynard’s corpse was discovered.” The brawny Tolle stopped by the crimson wooden door.

Klein thought and asked, “Which guest was assigned to this guest room?”

“Nobody. There are too many guest rooms in the house, so it wasn’t used.” Tolle put on his white gloves and turned the knob of the crimson wooden door.

He made the constable who was keeping watch leave temporarily. Then, he nodded at Klein and said, “Inspector

Moretti, I’ll leave the rest to you.”

“May the Goddess bless us, and I hope that we find something.” Klein put on his white gloves too and locked the door behind him.

He walked to the side of the bed and saw that the crimson bedsheets were abnormally messy. The corpse laying on it was covered with a white cloth.

At this point, Klein could be considered to be quite experienced. He pulled away the white cloth without fear and looked at Member of Parliament Maynard.

The man was in his forties. His blond hair was trimmed short, and his expression was a mixture of pain and happiness.

Klein took two steps back and took out the ingredients he needed. He quickly finished the setup for the mediumship ritual.

As the faint calming fragrance swirled around him, he recited the divination statement that he thought of long ago, “The cause of Maynard’s death.”

“The cause of Maynard’s death.”

...

As he recited the statement, Klein retreated to a nearby high back chair and sat down slowly.

His eyes darkened, then he leaned back and quickly fell into a deep sleep.

In the illusory and blurry world, he suddenly saw the gentleman from earlier.

With his opened blue eyes, Maynard was laying prostrate above a woman with an outstanding body and fair skin. He was thrusting hard against her body.

He first displayed an expression of extreme satisfaction and happiness. Then, he suddenly clutched his chest with his right hand. His expression then grew contorted.

Pa!

As Maynard fell, the image quickly shattered. Klein opened his eyes and woke up from his dream.

I can't believe I can actually watch porn in such a manner... So, Maynard had an affair and died of exhaustion? Klein chuckled and massaged his temples.

He took out a pen and paper before doing another ritual. He drew a portrait of the lady he had seen in his dream with the aid of the ritual. Of course, everything below her neck was omitted.

It was a woman whose age was hard to tell. She had the mature vibe of a woman in her thirties, but there was a remnant of innocence to her. Her eyes were crystal clear, and she had a delicate look.

Klein looked at his work, then put away his ritual ingredients, and dispelled the spirituality wall.

He leaned sideways to grab his silver-edged cane.

Suddenly, he heard the reverberating sound of someone clearing their throat. He immediately got goosebumps!

Klein looked towards the bed and saw Maynard gripping the crimson bedsheets so tightly that the tendons on the backs of his hands were protruding out.

With a swoosh, the Member of Parliament who died between nine and eleven the previous night suddenly sat up. Saliva drooled from the corners of his lips as he opened his vacant eyes wide.

Before Klein could come up with any new ideas, he saw the rigid Maynard lift both his hands up. Its body lunged forward to his left amidst the sound of hurtling wind!

In the past, his dulled reactions under such sudden, unexpected situations would've made it hard for him to avoid this. Even if he had noticed the attack ahead of time, he would have had to roll away to avoid the fast-moving corpse.

But now, Klein could nearly react on instinct. He stomped down with his bright, buttonless leather boots and jumped diagonally onto the high-back chair.

As it had only been a day since he advanced, he was still getting used to his power, agility, and speed. He had accidentally leaped too high into the air and landed on the top of the chair's highback!

It was a narrow edge. Klein's heart tightened as he quickly controlled his body and adjusted his center of gravity.

He wavered for a moment and surprisingly managed to stabilize himself, like a black cat flaunting its balance and poise.

As he was wavering, he flailed his left arm, swinging his cane into the zombie's ribs as it pounced forward. The strike caused it to lose its balance as it staggered and fell onto the carpet.

Klein was standing on top of the chair as he felt for his revolver by raising his right arm. He attempted to pull it out from the holster so that he could deliver a silver demon hunting bullet at the zombie in front of him.

But in that instant, he suddenly wondered about the aftermath.

If he were to blow a hole in Member of Parliament Maynard's corpse, how was he going to explain the cause of death to the deceased's family or Members of Parliament who were focusing on the matter?

All I did was double-tap his corpse?

As he was thinking, Klein reached into the pocket of his police uniform and felt for a triangular plate.

The Requiem Charm... He quickly made a decision. He took out the silver amulet without hesitation and let out a low shout in Hermes, "Crimson!"

As the incantation reverberated within the room, the charm started to release a peaceful aura. Klein quickly infused his spirituality into the amulet and tossed it to Zombie Maynard who was struggling to get up.

A cold blue fire appeared, enveloping the triangular plate. A serene and gentle black aura spread forth rapidly, eliminating the anxiety and worry of the soul.

Zombie Maynard stopped there, his eyes staring blankly at the ground. His saliva dripped onto the carpet.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief and planned to take out the materials and set up a ritual to purify the desecrated being, but suddenly, Maynard once again let out a groan, his blank eyes focused on the left pocket of Klein's police uniform again.

Shit... Klein leaped from the top of the chair to the ledge of the oriel window.

At the same time, he heard the sound of the chair breaking.

Klein had no choice but to take out a rectangular silver plate.

The Slumber Charm!

It wasn't only living things that could be put into a deep sleep. The dead were in a state of eternal sleep and would only be woken up under unusual circumstances!

In certain books on mysticism, there was even such a description regarding zombies: They slumber by the day and wake up in the night.

"Crimson!"

Klein once again recited the incantation in Hermes. He intended to disregard the consequences and shoot the corpse with his revolver if that failed again.

The problems that came later wouldn't matter if he was dead!

As he felt the silver rectangular plate in his palm turn cold, Klein injected his spirituality into it and tossed the charm out.

A dark red flame illuminated his eyes as the sound of a light explosion reverberated around the room.

A gentle power spread forth, bringing with it a fatigue that affected every living being. Zombie Maynard had just propped himself up using the chair when he wavered. His eyes closed, and he fell on his back with a plop.

With what had just happened, Klein didn't dare to relax. He immediately took out the Amantha extract distilled from Night vanilla, Slumber flower, and Chamomile, as well as the bark of the Drago tree, and the Full Moon Essence Oil made from Moon flowers. He quickly set up a sacrificial altar.

Right on the heels of that, he sealed the surrounding area with a spirituality wall with the aid of Holy Night Powder, encompassing the altar and the sleeping Zombie Maynard.

After silently reciting the incantation and lighting three corresponding candles, he dripped a few drops of essential oil extract and scattered various powders onto the flames. Klein then took a step back and cautiously looked at Zombie Maynard. He then recited in Hermes,

"Standing higher than the cosmos and more eternal than eternity, the Evernight Goddess.

"I pray for your loving grace.

"I pray that you look over your loyal guardian,

"I pray for the power of the crimson.

"I pray for the power of sleep and silence,

"I pray that you purify the unclean being around me, the gentleman once called John Maynard."

...

"Moon flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!

"Slumber flower, a herb that belongs to the red moon, please bestow your powers to my incantation!"

...

It was as if a midnight breeze blew within the wall of spirituality. A thin veil of black steam started to billow from Zombie Maynard.

When everything settled, Klein used his Spirit Vision and divination to repeatedly confirm that the zombie wouldn't "awaken" once more.

After seeing the results, his worries eased. He ended the ritual and dispelled the wall of spirituality.

"Why would he suddenly come back to life?" Klein stood in front of Maynard, who was on the carpet. He knitted his brows as he looked down at the corpse.

To a Beyonder with high spiritual sensitivity, there were obvious signs to note if a corpse would come back to life or not, much less Klein, who was a Seer. He often had a premonition of similar matters, but what had happened just now completely took him by surprise.

Unless-unless there is a more mysterious influence at play... Just like what happened with the suited clown. Klein recalled the scene in his head and faintly sensed the problem:

Zombie Maynard had been trying to attack the left pocket of his police uniform!

Left pocket? Klein transferred his black cane to his right palm, then reached for the pocket with his left hand. He took out the ancient copper whistle that was inside.

It was a copper whistle carved with many mysterious patterns. It was the copper whistle used to summon Azik's messenger.

This copper whistle zombified Maynard? That's quite plausible. Even if Mr. Azik isn't a descendant of Death, he definitely has a certain connection with Death. It's logical that the objects that he carries with him would produce such an effect... Klein nodded in thought. He took out a copper penny and did a quick divination about his conclusion.

As he was at the scene of the incident, holding the relevant objects, and had ample information, he quickly got a result. He saw the copper penny fall into his palm, portrait facing up.

This means yes. To think that Mr. Azik didn't remind me to be cautious that these things could happen... Well... He's an amnesiac, so it's not uncommon to forget this. Besides, the copper whistle might not have had negative effects when it was on him. There's a high possibility that it was suppressed. I shouldn't take this copper whistle with me when I'm at cemeteries or ancient castles, places that are prone to hauntings. Otherwise, I'll just be finding trouble for myself and crazily court death... Klein silently made a mental note. He then carried the naked Maynard back onto the bed without much effort.

Looking at the obvious mark on the corpse left behind by the stroke of the cane, Klein sighed. He covered the corpse with the piece of white cloth and pretended not to notice.

I'll leave this problem to the police department to vex over it! Oh, and the two charms I used just now can be considered missionrelated expenses, so I can get compensated... He thought as he packed up. He then took the portrait and unlocked the door.

The door opened with a creak and Klein saw Inspector Tolle, who had been guarding outside, not allowing anyone to come near.

"What happened just now?" Tolle asked in doubt and worry. He could faintly hear the action going on

in the room.

Klein smiled and deliberately said with a little exaggeration,

"Member of Parliament Maynard came back to life and tried to give me a passionate hug."

"Don't joke like that..." Tolle looked into the room in exasperation.

"Why so serious?" Klein said, throwing up his hands. "Due to an unconfirmed reason, Member of Parliament Maynard became a zombie. Well—the kind of things that would happen in ghost stories. Fortunately, I hadn't left yet, so I used ritualistic magic to purify the desecration, allowing him to return to his eternal slumber."

"Is this related to his cause of death?" Tolle asked, his expression stern.

"I cannot give you an answer to that. I don't even know what the problem is. You should know that in our field, unexplainable things are a common occurrence," Klein said. He then looked at the portrait

in his hand, “When I was doing the mediumship ritual, I saw the scene of Maynard’s death. He was engaging in some activities that should only be done between a husband and wife with this woman. And at the climax of his joy, he clutched his chest where the heart is.”

“You mean that... that is the cause of his death?” Tolle gave him a “nudge nudge” and “wink wink” look.

“In theory, yes, but you should wait for the autopsy.” Klein handed the portrait over to Inspector Tolle.

Tolle had only glanced at it when he exclaimed, “Madam Sharon!”

Klein looked at him, lost.

“Is she very famous?”

Yea, judging from her looks and figure, she should be famous... He lampooned in his heart.

Tolle looked around and introduced her in a somewhat excited manner, “Madam Sharon is the prettiest widow in Tingen City. She’s the most sought-after lady in social settings. She was the second wife of Baron Khoy, but unfortunately became widowed.

“She is welcomed by many amongst the nouveau riche merchants and aristocrats, someone who can be invited to banquets by both the Conservative Party and the New Party.”

“It’s rumored that she and her stepson, the current Baron Khoy, are on ‘friendly’ terms with many nobles and senior civil servants in Backlund. She’s a powerful lady. To think that she and Member of Parliament Maynard had such a relationship... Hehe...”

Simply put, she’s an exceptional socialite... Klein secretly concluded. He turned around and pointed into the room.

“The next part is not included in my job description. How you interrogate Madam Sharon is none of my business.”

“Also, I hit Member of Parliament Maynard with a cane before the purification. You’ll have to deal with it and think of an explanation.”

"What?" The bearlike Tolle jumped in shock and looked at Klein before looking into the room. With agility that wasn't suited to his body, he dashed in.

He pulled back the white cloth that covered the corpse and after examining the body carefully, he heaved a breath of relief.

"It's better than I imagined. It's not that serious a problem."

Maybe I should've drawn my revolver and shot Maynard five times with demon hunting bullets. Let's see if you find that serious or not... Klein lampooned inwardly and pointed outside the door.

"That's all that you need me for, right?"

"No!" Tolle shouted. "Wait a moment."

Klein asked, puzzled, "Why?"

Tolle explained seriously, "We have to prevent any accidents from happening. After we talk to Madam Sharon and get her testimony, I'll send you back to Zouteland Street."

If Maynard can resurrect after being dead for ten hours, what else couldn't happen? What would I do if you leave? Tolle added in his head.

"Alright." Klein massaged his temple and said, "Find a quiet room for me to rest in then."

He wasn't feeling his best in every aspect as he had just advanced a day ago. Having just performed multiple ritual ceremonies, used two charms, and suffered a nontrivial scare, he needed to enter Cogitation to eliminate any problems.

Klein was now extremely cautious about losing control.

Tolle covered the dead body with the white cloth again. He obviously relaxed and replied, "No problem."

He brought Klein to a guest room that was closer to the sunlit side of the house. He pointed and said, "Inspector Moretti, don't worry. No one will disturb you. I'll be paying Madam Sharon a

visit first."

Klein nodded slightly and watched him walk away. Then, he closed the door and drew the curtains.

In the dim and silent bedroom, he slowly walked over to the rocking chair and sat down comfortably. He allowed his body to rock back and forth rhythmically.

There were countless spherical phantasmal lights overlapping in his mind. The buzzing sounds in Klein's ears and the throbbing ache in his head slowly vanished, bit by bit.

When his situation stabilized, he opened his eyes and looked into the darkness. He outlined a bed, cupboard, and other furniture. Then, he calmly thought about his earlier attempts.

There isn't much feedback from a few exaggerated jokes...

Maybe I have yet to control the powers of the Clown potion, as there are still remnant negative effects... Of course, I can't eliminate the possibility that such "acting" has little effect.

Personally, I'm not quite willing to play the role of a clown. But since I picked the Sequence pathway, I can only bite the bullet and continue...

Actually, everyone has to act like a clown at one point or another in their lives. I don't have to be so uncomfortable with the idea.

I have to quickly understand a Clown's core elements...

As various thoughts churned in his mind, Klein suddenly took out a brass halfpence.

Mostly out of habit, he divined if Maynard's death was due to supernatural influences.

Maybe it's an occupational hazard... Klein shook his head and laughed. His eyes grew dark as he recited repeatedly, "John Maynard's death was due to supernatural influences."

...

Ding!

He flipped the coin as he slouched into the rocking chair. He watched its brass luster twinkle as it rotated in the air.

Pak! The coin fell right into Klein's open palm, revealing the number 1⁄2 facing up.

A negative answer. In other words, there weren't any supernatural influences involved in John Maynard's death. *I guess that man died of orgasmic pleasure. The deceased shouldn't be laughed at, so I won't be using an insipid Chinese phrase to mock him...* Klein put away his coin and allowed his thoughts to wander before he nearly fell asleep.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Under the slow and rhythmic knocking, Klein tidied his clothing, put on his policeman's peak cap, and walked to the door.

Just as his right palm touched the knob, a scene appeared in his mind.

The bearlike Inspector Tolle was standing outside the door and pulling his collar. His expression looked disturbed and helpless.

Klein turned the knob and opened the door leisurely.

Inspector Tolle appeared before him as he pulled at his collar.

"Sorry for making you wait so long.

"We've already found Madam Sharon and obtained her statement. You can return to Zouteland Street.

"I'm really sorry for taking up your precious time."

Klein didn't ask the reason for his current emotions but he smiled and said, "Madam Sharon admitted that she was with Maynard last night?"

"Yes. She said that under the influence of alcohol, she and Maynard didn't manage to control themselves. When she found out that he died of a heart attack, she was very afraid so she fled the room after she tidied herself up. She then hid in her own guest room. We don't have enough reason to raise charges against her right now, so we had to let her go while restricting some of her freedom. We'll have to wait for the autopsy," Inspector Tolle explained in detail.

Klein leaned his head sideways and smiled.

"Who are you explaining this to?"

Tolle shook his head and forced a bitter smile. "Oh yeah, I don't have to explain it to you. I'm just frustrated by Mrs Maynard, and I started blabbering without realizing it."

"Maynard's wife is back?" Klein asked in response.

"Yes, unfortunately. There was something abnormal about the steam locomotive. It wasn't late." Tolle gave an affirmative answer in a joking manner.

Klein didn't ask further but checked if he had all his personal belongings, before following Inspector Tolle down the stairs.

"Why aren't you arresting her?

"She's a murderer! I want to sue her, and I want to sue all of you for negligence of duty!

“I’ll hire the best lawyer to sue you!”

...

Harsh remarks entered Klein’s ears, and he looked over subconsciously. He saw a voluptuous and fair middle-aged lady staring angrily across her. Despite having two young men holding her arms, she continued yelling at them.

A very trendy regal gown in Backlund this year... Having frequently read the magazine, Ladies Aesthetic, the first thought on Klein’s mind was something unrelated to the situation. He then saw a few gentlemen protecting a lady behind them.

The lady was in a long black dress with fair smooth skin, waterfall-like brown hair, and brown eyes. She looked as pitiful as a fawn in the woods. It made people want to protect her involuntarily.

Madam Sharon... Klein suddenly thought of the “porno” she had starred in. He quickly lifted his right hand, covered his mouth, and coughed twice.

Out of habit, he tapped his left molars twice and observed the people present with Spirit Vision.

There’s some sort of problem with Mrs. Maynard’s body. The colors of her aura are thinner. From the colors of her emotions, she’s definitely feeling anger and hatred, which is consistent with her outward appearance...

Huh? The color of Madam Sharon’s emotions are shaded in blue, which represents rational thinking and calmness... This is totally contrary to her appearance of panic and nervousness. As expected, a socialite ain’t no innocent bunny... Her body is very healthy.

After examining her, Klein was about to retract his gaze when he suddenly saw Madam Sharon lift her head and steal a glance in his direction. Then, she lowered her head again and put on a trembling trepid look.

If I couldn’t see your emotion colors directly, I might’ve been fooled by your act... You should consider working as an actress... Klein lampooned. He didn’t stay any longer and left Maynard’s house with Inspector Tolle. They took the carriage arranged by the police station and returned to Zouteland Street.

After taking over the shift from the Captain, he continued to stay on duty at Chanis Gate. He took the opportunity to write a claims application.

After an uneventful night, Klein returned upstairs and received the breakfast that he had requested Rozanne to buy for him.

“I love this pastry!” he complimented.

He had already passed her the money for breakfast ahead of time.

“Really? I can try it tomorrow then!” Rozanne replied happily.

The corner of Klein’s lip twitched as he focused on his battle with the milk and pastry.

At twenty-five minutes past eight, he yawned and fought back the urge to fall asleep, he arrived at the nearby Shooting Club.

He had made an appointment with the asylum doctor, Daxter Guderian, a few days back.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

In the small shooting range, Klein and Daxter aimed at their own targets and finished their cylinder of bullets.

Clink! Clank! Daxter flipped and released the empty shells and examined Klein in interest.

“You’re much more confident than before.”

Of course, I advanced to Sequence 8. I now possess actual combat ability... Klein reflected on his own facial expression and body movements in his head and deliberately acted arrogantly.

"Because I only used about a month's time to master the power of my potion completely."

Daxter pouted slightly and said, "Although that is something to be proud of, there's no need to say it all the time."

Hey, as a Spectator, you didn't see through my performance... From the looks of it, a Clown has the power to suppress a

Spectator's ability. Klein smiled at his discovery and asked, "How's Hood Eugen recently?"

"...He's gone insane for real." Daxter paused and continued, "I probed him with various methods. He really has gone insane. I'm considering whether to begin medicating him, to see if I can treat him."

As a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist, he actually pretended to be a mental patient... Even though he was giving treatments to other patients, it doesn't align with the core element of the potion's name. That was an incorrect way of using the "acting method." It's no wonder that he went insane... Klein thought and said, "Before he went insane, did you find out who got in contact with him?"

"Besides the doctors, patients, nurses, and odd-job workers in the asylum, there were no outsiders that had contact with him," Daxter confidently replied.

Klein briefly acknowledged that as he said, "How about even earlier? Is there anyone that visited him, or did he leave the asylum regularly for a period of time?"

In order to follow through with his initial promise, Klein never asked anything about Hood Eugen in his first few meetings.

Daxter fell into deep thought. It took him some time before he said, "Besides the members of the Psychology Alchemists, there weren't any more than five people that visited him. One of them came thrice. His name was El."

Without Klein asking, he continued, "But I heard from Hood Eugen that El was a pseudonym.

"His real name was Lanevus."

Lanevus? That criminal who cheated both money and sex? To think that he had a connection to Hood Eugen from the Psychology Alchemists... Klein froze for a moment when he heard the name. He immediately thought about the implications the name "Lanevus" had.

He's the cheat that escaped with more than 10,000 pounds!

Just a providing a clue would earn me 10 pounds. And if I help in capturing this moving treasury, I'll earn 100 pounds!

He's a scum that took advantage of the bodies and feelings of innocent women!

To think that he knows Hood Eugen and went to visit him three times at the mental asylum. Does this mean that he's connected to the Beyonder circle, or that he's a Beyonder himself? Klein suddenly recalled the name of a potion: the Marauder pathway Sequence 8—Swindler!

These Beyonders took pleasure in swindling others!

It's very possible! Klein nodded in thought. He controlled his facial expression and body language, feigning nonchalance as he asked, "Then, when was Mr. Lanevus's last visit to Hood Eugen?"

"Early July. I would have to check the registration records of the mental asylum to give you a specific date," Daxter Guderian replied after a few seconds of thought.

Lanevus's scam hadn't been exposed back in early July and he hadn't left Tingen... Klein then asked, "Does Hood Eugen mention this person usually?"

"No. You should understand that a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist would never reveal something by accident. Every word they say has been deliberated over thoroughly. It would be impossible to learn their secrets unless they have some other hidden motives. I was only able to get the Telepathist formula after Hood Eugen went mad. Oh right, have you determined the authenticity of the formula?" Daxter expertly hid his feelings of pride toward his pathway's potion.

Klein laughed and replied, "It's authentic. When you need to advance, you can use that to concoct your potion without worry. We can help if the Psychology Alchemists are unable to provide you with the ingredients. Also, how have you been lately?"

"Not too bad. Other than being a little worried about Hood Eugen's condition, I feel rather relaxed. I no longer have symptoms of a split personality. You've helped me greatly in this regard," Daxter Guderian said, full of emotion.

Klein wore a humble expression.

"It's only right."

"Let's return to the topic at hand. Since you said that a Psychiatrist would deliberate over their every word before uttering it and wouldn't easily reveal their secrets, why did Hood Eugen tell you that El is Lanevus? Was he hinting at something, or was trying to warn you of anything?"

Daxter froze for a moment, then creased his brows.

"This is really weird, to think that I didn't notice this... Other than that, Hood Eugen didn't mention anything else. Could his motive be for me to tell the upper echelons of the association about the name Lanevus should he meet with any problems?

"The association's reaction seemed strange, too. After I informed them about Hood Eugen's insanity, they did send a liaison. But after I described every detail, including Lanevus's name, there were no more replies from the upper echelons. It was like being a stone cast in the ocean. Could this mean that they've figured something out?"

“A reasonable deduction.” Klein took out his demon hunting bullets and stuffed them into his revolver, then took aim at the target.

“If we follow this deduction, Hood Eugen might’ve long anticipated that he would become insane or die... And this has an untenable connection with Lanevus? But since he already anticipated it, why didn’t he ask for help from the upper echelons?” Daxter gazed blankly ahead. He thought hard as he said, “Unfortunately, he’s insane now. There’s no way to effectively communicate with him now.”

“Perhaps some kind of temptation made him choose to take the risk.” Klein made a guess.

At the same time, he felt that it was regrettable that Hood Eugen had really become a mental patient. This compromised much of the information that he might have otherwise gotten.

Sigh. Even a dead person is better than a lunatic. I can use mediumship rituals to make the dead talk, but what can I do with a lunatic? Oh right, Madam Daly once tried to use mediumship rituals to call upon my lost memories. The theory behind the mediumship rituals seems to have been derived from the Psychology Alchemists... This means that I can also use the mediumship rituals on the living and create a scenario where I interact with his spirit directly using my spirit... I wonder if Hood Eugen would still be insane under those conditions.

Unfortunately, I’m not advanced enough in this field, so I don’t think I would be able to do it... I’ll call upon the messenger and ask Madam Daly about it first. I’ll see if she can provide me with any techniques. If she thinks that only she can accomplish it, then I’ll tell the Captain and get him to send a telegraph to Backlund to request for assistance...

I’m definitely not taking this troublesome course of action just because I want to learn the technique and attempt the ritual to summon the messenger...

Many thoughts ran through Klein’s mind before he gradually narrowed it down to a single line of thought that could solve the problem.

Daxter Guderian approved of his guess.

“Greed always makes one foolish. Even when a person knows that there’s only the abyss in front of him, he’ll still attempt to walk to the edge and take a peek.”

This is called crazily testing the limits of fate... Klein lampooned.

“Try your best to treat Hood Eugen after returning to the mental asylum. Try to keep him sober for a period of time and get some clues out of him.”

“Also, don’t hide your worries and anxiety. Establish more connections with the Psychology Alchemists and put pressure on them to solve Hood Eugen’s problem. That’s the most normal and reasonable reaction.”

Daxter nodded seriously.

“I’ll try my best.”

Klein didn’t say anymore and, after some deliberation, he asked, “Has there been any abnormalities with Hood Eugen’s body recently? For example, thin scales growing on some parts of his body?”

“Near-insanity,” “true insanity,” and “losing control” were all descriptions of varying levels for a Beyonder when something was wrong with them. The least severe of the conditions were when their attitude changed as if they had become a new person, but were still capable of rational thoughts and actions. That was “near-insanity.” “Insanity” was more severe in that the person would lose all logic, becoming a maniac and was difficult to communicate with. Those that couldn’t be saved were those whose body and mind had become monsters, completely “losing control.”

Sometimes, if the problem wasn’t dealt with promptly, insanity would lead to losing control.

Before this, to avoid exposing the informant within the Psychology Alchemists, Dunn instructed the Nighthawks not to immediately deal with Hood Eugen. Instead, they switched to surveillance to ensure that Hood Eugen didn't lose control. But if there were signs of him losing control, they would have to deal with him immediately.

Daxter shook his head and let out a bitter laugh.

"No, you can ease your concern. I'm also very afraid that Hood Eugen will lose control, so I'm paying very close attention to detail. After all, I'm at the mental asylum six times a week."

After exchanging a few more words, they left the shooting range ten minutes apart.

Klein fought back his intense desire to sleep and took a public carriage back to Daffodil Street.

He opened the door and saw his sister sitting on the sofa. She was neither reading nor was she fiddling with machinery parts. She was just staring blankly ahead as if she had lost her soul.

Tapping his molars gently, Klein activated his Spirit Vision and asked, puzzled, "Melissa, did something happen?"

She looks healthy based on the colors of her aura, not malnourished like she was before...

Melissa retracted her gaze and pursed her lips, then looked at the kitchen which was producing some noise.

"Bella has been recommending the way that her family prepares breakfast back at home, she said that it's very delicious. I agreed to let her try it out this morning."

"What method is that?" Klein had an ominous feeling.

"Cooking all of the leftovers in a pot, then adding water and bread..." Melissa repeated softly.

T-this is the standard recipe for food of unknown origins... Klein pinched his forehead.

"And so?"

"We shouldn't waste food..." Melissa bit her lips and nodded.

Sis, I feel like you are questioning life... Klein cleared his throat and suppressed his desire to laugh. He then asked, "Where's Benson?"

"In the bathroom." Melissa broke free of her daze, as her eyes regained their luster.

At that moment, he heard the sounds of flushing from the bathroom. Benson came out with a newspaper in hand.

"My dear Klein, shall we get you a portion of breakfast?"

"No, I've already eaten." Klein shook his head resolutely, feeling lucky that he arranged to meet Daxter in the morning. Otherwise, he wouldn't have gotten Rozanne to buy breakfast for him.

"How regrettable. Otherwise, you would change your views on my culinary skills and be filled with confidence about it." Benson let out a self-deprecating laugh.

At this moment, Melissa noticed something. She turned to look at Klein and said, "You're back rather late today."

Sis, be more innocent and lively. Don't worry about me all the time... The state you were in just now was great! Klein immediately smiled.

"I have good news."

"You passed the examination of the police department and can obtain an increased salary?" Melissa asked without thinking.

Benson also smiled and nodded.

"..." Klein grabbed his hat and stood at the edge of the living room. He said in amusement, "How am I supposed to surprise you guys like that?"

After that, he added with a dry cough, "Yes, my salary has increased severalfold."

He hid his recent increment of four additional pounds a week. He intended to save up a small piggy bank for himself. After all, he couldn't just rely on the money in the unmarked account. Furthermore, mentioning that his salary had increased severalfold was enough to scare his siblings.

"Six pounds?" Melissa exclaimed in shock, finding it bizarre.

"I really need to change my job." Benson stroked his hairline.

With the information Klein provided him, he had been putting a lot of effort into his studies.

Without waiting for Klein to speak, Melissa said with a delighted expression, "In that case, after deducting our normal expenses, you'll be able to save up enough money in two or three years to meet the standards of a marriageable gentleman. Well, it was Elizabeth who told me about the standards."

"..." Klein said at a loss, amused, "That's something to be considered far into the future. Shouldn't we celebrate? I hereby announce that from today on, our staple food shall become white bread. After my workload decreases, we shall go try out delicacies from different restaurants."

Melissa glanced at him, and, as though she did not hear what Klein had said, she said, "Benson and I are attending Mass at the Saint Selena Cathedral, do you want to come?"

I am praising the Goddess everyday... Klein laughed.

"I need to catch up on sleep."

He slept until half past twelve in the afternoon. After he had lunch with Benson and Melissa, he continued on with his mission of searching all the houses with red chimneys.

When it was late at night, he sealed his room with spirituality and prepared to try the ritual for summoning Spirit Guide Daly's messenger.

For Klein, setting up a simple ritual was as easy as breathing. Very soon, he was done preparing the ingredients, and he lit up the candle that represented himself.

Looking at the flickering candlelight on the desk, Klein had an amusing thought for some baffling reason.

Would this be considered holding a candlelight vigil in memory of myself?

*F**k, what the hell am I thinking!?*

...

He reined back his thoughts and picked up the Black Rotten Flower powder that belonged to the domain of Death and sprinkled it onto the candle. In return, he caught a whiff of a smell that was akin to formaldehyde from his previous life.

Immediately after that, he dripped Full Moon Essence Oil, a favored item of the Evernight.

Amidst a sizzling crackle, his surroundings suddenly became quiet, and there was a shapeless, magical surge.

Klein took a step back and softly recited in ancient Hermes, "I!" Then, he changed into Hermes, "I summon in my name."

"The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, the higherdimensional creature that a human orders, the messenger that belongs to Daly Simone." *Whoosh!*

The wind wailed and the dim candlelight was tainted with a blue luster.

Under its illumination, the wall behind the desk produced translucent ripples, and a creepy face surfaced. Other than its mouth, it had no eyebrows, eyes, or nose.

Its thick lips parted, and a long red tongue was extended. There were sharp, irregular teeth that lined its mouth. In addition, the tip of the tongue had five delicate fingers. They were constantly extending and retracting, as though they were waiting for a delivery.

This is Daly's messenger? Compared to Mr. Azik's, it's just like a child. No, I can't accurately determine their differences. Yes, one is an adult Giant, and the other is a human baby... I wonder if it's due to the mystical item, or if it signifies Mr. Azik's strength? I have to reevaluate my understanding of him. Perhaps, he's a High-Sequence Beyonder...

Crap, I forgot. In the letter, I should've asked Madam Daly for the names of the Sequence 4 and Sequence 3 Corpse Collector pathway. Mr. Azik most likely belongs to that pathway. Of course, he might've not advanced via potions. Yes, perhaps it's a gene that's passed down from his ancestors... I'll ask next time, the messenger is waiting...

Klein looked at it seriously for a while and passed the neatly folded paper into the messenger's "hand." Then, he watched as the hand gripped it tightly.

Whoosh!

The messenger retracted its tongue and swallowed the letter. The translucent, creepy, and wriggling face shrank back into the wall and disappeared.

I've got to say, this magic is quite cool. Rather convenient too, but it can't be spread... Klein looked at the candlelight that had returned to normal. He shook his head and ended the ritual.

...

Monday morning. Backlund, Empress Borough.

In a hidden corner of the municipal garden built by Duke Negan, Xio Derecha with her unkempt blond hair and Fors Wall with her languid bearing were gawking at the liaison before them in a daze. They were momentarily at a loss at which language to use for a greeting.

The petite Xio, who was slightly over one and a half meters tall, looked at the golden retriever that had extended its tongue and was wagging its tail. She smoothed out her trainee knight attire and weighed her words before she said, “Are you Miss Audrey’s messenger?

“Oh my Goddess, why am I asking a dog so seriously...”

Fors was holding a thin cigarette with her fingers as she chuckled.

“Maybe it’s a magical creature?”

“I’ve never seen a magical creature that looks so much like a dog...” Xio replied in all seriousness.

Susie sat down and closed her mouth. She then pointed at her belly with her paw.

There was a leather pouch tied around the dog’s body amidst her long golden fur.

Xio looked to her left and right, making sure that there was no one watching before she quickly moved closer. She bent down and removed the pouch.

Fors watched curiously when her expression suddenly turned weird.

“It’s made of crocodile skin, and it looks like the work of the fashion designer, Mr. Sades... She’s actually using such a pouch for the transaction...”

“...In other words, it’s very expensive?” Xio raised the leather pouch.

Fors pursed her lips tightly and nodded seriously.

Xio instantly lowered her speed in an exaggerated manner. She carefully opened the zipper and took out the letter inside, as though she was carrying an antique vase in her hands.

After she read it, she passed the letter to Fors.

Fors burned it with her cigarette after reading it carefully. She watched as it turned into ashes and scattered onto the soil.

“There’s no extra information provided.” Xio pouted subconsciously. She took out a neatly folded paper from the pocket of her trainee knight attire.

She looked at Susie in an imposing manner and exhorted subconsciously, “This is the investigation report for the past few days. You must pass this on to Miss Audrey Hall directly.”

Susie quivered and sat up straight, her tail was wagging vigorously.

Xio nodded in satisfaction, stuffed the stack of papers into the leather pouch, and tied it around Susie again.

Susie howled and ran off very quickly.

...

In the Hall family’s luxurious villa.

Audrey was sitting on the sofa of her own living room. She was holding a letter opener and was trying to open the letter before her.

It was a letter sent by one of her brothers from the Balam Empire in the Southern Continent. There was a parcel that came along with the letter.

At that moment, she saw Susie push open the half-closed door. The dog dashed over quickly.

Susie sat on the carpet before Audrey and pawed at the leather pouch.

“You really are an excellent messenger!” Audrey wasn’t stingy with her compliments.

Susie looked back at the door. It induced vibrations in the air and said softly, “Your friend is very serious. When I saw her, she reminded me of the time when a hunter came to train us.”

She had been a complimentary gift when Earl Hall bought hunting dogs.

Susie, your Loen is getting more and more fluent. There are just a few problems with your logic in using the language... Audrey watched as her golden retriever took off the pouch on her own and skillfully pulled open the zipper.

She gave Susie a look and immediately understood. She stood up and ran to lock the door.

“...There’s no result so far, but we found that some vagrants disappeared around the Backlund Bridge borough. Though, we can’t know for sure that it was Qilangos. Perhaps the vagrants merely changed their movement patterns suddenly...” Audrey flipped through the investigation report and seriously wondered how she should reply to Xio and Fors.

I’ll tell Xio that as long as she can track down Vice Admiral Hurricane, Qilangos, I’ll buy the Sheriff potion formula for her... No, that’s not friendly enough. It would make her feel an inferiority complex. Yes, I shall say, “Xio, I’ve prepared your reward. As long as you can complete the task, four hundred and fifty pounds will be yours...” Sigh, as far as the main ingredients for the Telepathist formula, I’ve only found the Farsman Rabbit’s spinal fluid. I still need the Rainbow Salamander’s pituitary gland... Glaint, Xio, and Fors have yet to find it...

Audrey, cheer up. At least you’ve digested the Spectator potion completely!

Once you put together all the ingredients, you’ll become a Sequence 8 Beyonder!

...

Audrey reined in her thoughts, picked up a pen and paper, and quickly wrote a reply. She stuffed it back into the leather pouch and entrusted Susie to make another trip.

She watched her golden retriever as she opened the letter that her brother had sent. She read it with a smile.

“My dear sister,

“I think you should come to the Southern Continent too. Come over to the colonized regions of the Balam Empire. There’s abundant sunlight, fresh air, a clean environment, freshly caught seafood, various unique cultures, and the very kind and obedient Balam people who make good servants, as well as the smell of freedom.

“On the contrary, Backlund is cold and moist, the air is bad, there’s always dust, and it’s always gloomy. Plus, it’s highly populated which leads to all sorts of problems. Hmm, and the endless balls, banquets, and salons... The social events are so boring and insipid that I wouldn’t want to stay for a minute. Dear sister, I believe you share the same feeling.

“I’m not running away from home. I’m merely seeking my own place in life, but our brother definitely doesn’t think so. He’s always been a selfish person. Of course, he wouldn’t be stingy with you, because you can only claim a tiny part of the family wealth, while I would be his biggest competition in the fight for the inheritance within the ranks of nobles. After all, our father is a count who takes a long view. He definitely wouldn’t be restrained by the rule that the eldest sibling will inherit the rank of nobility.

“As long as he feels that it’s necessary, he would do anything. Just like when he sold off half the farmland and pastures to enter the banking industry, regardless of the strong opposition.

“I miss Backlund sometimes, mostly Father, Mother, and you. I miss the smile that you put on my face during those few years. You must’ve become the most dazzling jewel in Backlund, but unfortunately, I’ll only be able to return after two years. A career is a man’s pride, while the outstanding young people in the Loen Kingdom treat the world as their stage.”

...

"You can tell our dear aunt that the coastal regions in the Balam Empire are very suitable for vacations, and especially suitable for her, given how her joints ache and swell in the winter. I sincerely invite her to be my guest. If you can come with her, that would be even better."

...

"I didn't send you too many gifts. They're mainly things that are rich with the traditions and styles of Balam, such as the unique yellow silk, and the ornaments that are filled with traits related to the worship of Death.

"I remembered that you loved things regarding mysticism so I'll look around for you. The culture here is full of mystery."

...

After reading the letter, Audrey picked up a pen, paper, and writing board. She leaned back into the sofa, pursed her lips and wrote seriously, "My dearest Alfred,

"Although it has been less than a year, the little girl in your memories has grown up. I don't like mysticism anymore, so you don't have to search for those kinds of things."

Because it's very dangerous... Audrey puffed up her cheeks and added in her head.

She had heard of too many tragedies related to mysterious objects when participating in Beyonder Gatherings and from stories Xio and Fors recounted.

She thought and declared excitedly, "I'm now interested in biology. Recently, I've been in awe of the Rainbow Salamander.

Can you ask around for me and find out where I can find one of these creatures, or if they have a complete corpse that has been preserved?"

Audrey stopped writing after she finished sharing some interesting news and scandals about aristocrats. She then adopted a serious pose as she recalled something.

With her exceptional memory as a Spectator, she arranged the information that she had received from her father's teachings, as well as the news she heard during banquets and salons into paragraphs.

After creating a draft in her head, Audrey penned, "As for the political situation in Backlund you asked about, it's not within my area of interest. I can describe it to you only based on my own impressions and the details that I happen to know.

"Some time ago, Father told me that after the abolishment of the Grain Act, the prices of crops were declining rapidly. The rent of farmland and pastures were also plunging, but I don't know the exact magnitude. I can only explain it to you with this example.

"As you know, Duke Negan is an aristocrat who owns the most land outside of the royal family. It's said that he owns more than 12,000,000 pounds worth of farmland, pastures, and forests. Last year, his land earned him a historic 1,300,000 pounds in rent. But this year, it's forecast that his rent will only be 850,000 pounds, a whole 450,000 pounds less. That's more than the entirety of the assets that I'm entitled to.

"Without any further explanation from me, I'm sure that my dear brother will understand the behavior of most old-fashioned nobles. They're proud of being landowners, and their income is derived mostly from rent. They place a heavy emphasis on their appearance and would maintain their current lifestyle even if they have to go into debt. They spend tens of thousands of pounds on the upkeep of their castles each year, many more thousands on clothes and jewelry, as well as their persistent hunting activities, social banquets, and the occasional lavish weddings and funerals, etc, etc.

"With the decrease in rent, according to my knowledge, a good portion of the nobles have met with financial difficulties. Because of this, Earl Wolf has sold 84,000 ares of land in the countryside and gotten 29,000 pounds in return. Viscount Conrad has also sold his art collection worth 55,000 pounds to a national art gallery.

"Other than a few visionary nobles who had long shifted their focus to steel, coal, railroads, banks, and rubber industries, the rest of the nobles have been severely affected by the Grain Act. Let us praise our dear Earl Hall!

"Father told me that the financial distress will loosen the control the nobles have over politics. As you can imagine, the number of ministers with blue blood will decline from the next year onward.

"In a bid to secure funding, the Conservative Party and the New Party have promised to confer upon anyone the noble titles as long as they donate a sufficient amount of money and lack any criminal records. Of course, the caveat is that the person who donated the money must own an amount of land befitting of a noble.

"One example is the rich Mr. Syndras. He purchased the lowest area of land expected of a baron, 60,000 ares, then donated 100,000 pounds to the Carleton Club and 400,000 pounds to the Conservative Party, and donations to charity amounting to 300,000 pounds. Finally, he succeeded in receiving conferment from His Majesty and became a highly-regarded baron. I've heard that there's a price list to this, 300,000 pounds for a baronet and 700,000 to 1,000,000 pounds for a hereditary baron. There is no clear price for the title of viscount or count, but I'm sure those are sufficiently ridiculous."

...

"This year, many nobles who are facing financial difficulties are starting to seriously consider the possibility of marriages with wealthy merchants. There have already been three marriages like this over the last two months. The betrothal gifts the noble women received are something to be envied.

“Also, the workers who protested the Grain Act did experience a decrease in the cost of living, but the quality of their lives has not improved. Instead, it seems to have deteriorated as the bankrupt farmers have entered the city and stolen their jobs by requesting lower wages. Thus, the wages of the laborers are dropping rapidly.

“I remember the day when Father asked me who I felt was the winner of the Grain Act.

“My dear Alfred, you must know the answer. You would definitely be able to obtain a hereditary baron title through your own efforts.”

...

Xio Derecha and Fors Wall were returning to the Backlund Bridge borough after they received Audrey’s reply.

Xio, with her messy blonde hair, was looking out the window of the carriage, her eyes were bright like two burning balls of flame.

She muttered the term “450 pounds” to herself repeatedly, as if reciting an incantation. Her strength and courage grew every time she repeated the term.

“Darkholme hasn’t reported the status of the investigation today. Let’s make a trip to his house!” Xio suddenly turned to look at Fors.

Darkholme was the leader of a gang in the Backlund East Borough and had control over many beggars and thieves.

Even though he looked very friendly with his chubby face that was perpetually adorned with a warm and amiable smile—Xio knew that he was a merciless scoundrel. He once broke the arm of a thirteen-year-old thief because the boy had hidden his profit.

Unless it was necessary, Xio was unwilling to meet Darkholme, but Darkholme was one of the few people who were most familiar with the vagrants in the city.

Fors pushed her slightly curly hair back behind her ear.

“As long as it doesn’t delay my lunch.”

“No problem! Perhaps I could treat you to an Intis feast after this week!” Xio promised in complacency.

“Must I thank God?” Fors asked as she laughed.

Unlike Xio, Fors was a moderate believer of the God of Steam and Machinery.

As they conversed, the two ladies switched to another public carriage and arrived at the Backlund East Borough, and arrived at Darkholme’s house.

It was a terrace house located in a narrow alley. There were green plants hanging from the walls, the exterior looked relatively unkempt.

Xio walked to the door, raised her right hand and knocked in a unique rhythm.

The unlocked door opened with a creak following her knocks.

Xio’s apparently confused expression immediately turned stern, like a wary lion’s.

She took out a triangular blade she carried with her and cautiously pushed open the door. She then slowly stepped inside.

Fors also stopped looking nonchalant, having produced a dagger of unknown origins.

They didn’t smell any peculiar scents, but their rich experience told them that something was off.

One step, two steps, three steps. Xio and Fors entered Darkholme’s house.

Then they saw a pale limb on a gas lamp, internal organs on a coffee table, as well as strips upon strips of flesh strewn on the floor and hung on the clothes rack!

Pieces of bone had been stripped clean and piled up near the door.

And amongst the bones was a head, its vacant eyes open. It was none other than Darkholme.

His chubby face still maintained the amiable smile, as if everything was normal. Furthermore, there was no stench of blood in the house.

As a former clinical doctor before becoming a best-selling author and Sequence 9 Beyonder, Fors has seen many death scenes more disgusting than this. She patted the tense Xio, who was on the brink of vomiting, as she surveyed the surroundings.

"Qilangos? Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos?"

"He realized that Darkholme was investigating the missing vagrants and tracked him back to his house?"

"Or could it be said that Darkholme had tracked him down, but ended up being caught?"

Xio fought back the urge to retch and said with a serious expression, "He sure lives up to his name as a merciless and crafty pirate admiral. The strangeness here also fits the description of his treasure."

"Crafty..." Fors was suddenly alarmed as she blurted out, "Could he be waiting nearby in an ambush against the mastermind behind the investigations?"

Xio froze for a moment before answering in a fluster, "That's highly likely!"

He was a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed, a powerful pirate with a mystical artifact, while they were just two Sequence 9's!

This was an extremely simple and easy contrast!

...

In the house opposite Darkholme's house, a man with a unique broad chin and dark green eyes in his thirties was standing by the window, coldly observing Xio's and Fors's opening of the door and slow entry.

He was none other than Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos!

The black glove on his left hand twitched as if it were alive. A layer of dull gold scales appeared on its surface.

Qilangos revealed a cruel and joyous expression as his dark green eyes turned pale gold and indifferent.

...

The moment Fors realized this, she dragged Xio to the other side and avoided the area just across the main door.

She then gritted her pearly-white teeth and took out a bracelet that was hidden by her sleeves.

This silver bracelet had three dark green, coarse stones which showed signs of burn marks and were rough and uneven.

Fors pulled out one of the stones and let out a low growl in ancient Hermes, "Door!"

She grabbed onto Xio Derecha tightly as the stone released a faint blue glow.

The figures of the two ladies turned indistinct, nearly invisible.

They saw many forms they found difficult to describe. There were even transparent objects that didn't seem to exist. They saw different colors, lustrous splendors which seemed to possess immense knowledge. They had entered the mysterious spirit world.

In this strange world that stood distinct from reality, Fors proceeded in a particular direction while pulling Xio along.

Seconds later, they exited their indistinct states and returned to reality—to Backlund.

But they were no longer at Darkholme's house, but instead arrived at an empty cemetery.

...

Qilangos, who was wearing his scaled glove, silently appeared at the door of Darkholme's house. He swept the interior with his cold gaze.

He froze for a moment, then creased his brows as he muttered to himself, "Traveler?"

...

In the cemetery.

"What are we going to do next?" Fors panted, sensing their predicament and feeling a lingering sense of fear.

The bracelet was a mystical item she had received along with the formula for Apprentice and its corresponding materials back during a fortuitous encounter of hers. Other than causing her to hear strange, faint murmurings during the full moon every month, it posed no threat.

There were originally five stones on the bracelet, each stone allowing her to traverse through the spirit world, technically allowing her to teleport. But now, there were only two stones left.

Xio calmed herself down and nodded solemnly.

"First notify Miss Audrey, then-then we call the police!"

"Call the police?" Fors Wall repeated in surprise.

To Beyonders, lodging a police report seemed to be something of another world.

Xio paced back and forth as she tugged her coarse blonde hair.

"The scene of Darkholme's death is harrowing and creepy. As long as the police aren't blind, they would definitely pass the case on to the Mandated Punishers, the Nighthawks, the Machinery Hivemind, or the special department of the military. When that happens, we can leak some more information and let them know that the murderer is Qilangos. At that point, the entire city will be chasing after him.

"Our goal is only to look for Qilangos, not to capture him. With the 'help' of so many Beyonders, things would become much simpler and safer. Once Qilangos panics and makes a mistake, it would be our chance to claim our bounty. Heh heh, I'm referring to the discovery of his whereabouts."

Xio laughed dryly and looked at the appalled Fors.

"Do you think that the only way I know to deal with problems is by charging into them headfirst? The difference between us and Qilangos is as vast as the Desi Bay."

Fors nodded slowly and said, "Your understanding of yourself is absolutely right. You've done too many things of a similar nature. Hence, the losses that you've suffered is sufficient for you to advance to Sequence 8.

"Luckily, you're still rational enough regarding this matter."

Xio lowered her head to look at her triangular blade. She thought for a moment and said, "...I have to be honest. I clearly sensed the approach of Death earlier. Qilangos was no doubt nearby. That was an aura evil enough to destroy us at any time. That triggered an instinctual response in me."

Fors wore her silver bracelet that had two stones left and thought seriously.

"I agree with your idea. Let's inform Miss Audrey first and lodge the police report after."

"Yes, regardless if it was Darkholme or his underlings who found Qilangos's traces, we could continue to investigate with that approach and find out Qilangos activity range and the location of his residence."

Xio creased her slim blonde eyebrows and said, "But Qilangos would definitely not remain in the same place."

Even as one of the Seven Pirate Admirals, even if he had the assistance of a mystical artifact, Qilangos had to be extremely careful in Backlund.

Even Nast, the King of the Five Seas, had once encountered disaster here and was nearly caught.

"No, what I meant was, to surmise or confirm the purpose of Qilangos's visit to Backlund based on the clues. Once we know what he's trying to do, no matter how he disguises himself or what tricks he pulls, he'll be exposed to us in the end. Then, our mission would be accomplished," Fors explained in detail. "Two years of novel-writing experience tells me that things would become simple once we grasp the crux of the matter."

Xio looked at her best friend in shock. She couldn't believe the woman had just made such a logical statement.

"I'm different from you. I'm merely too lazy to think, while you think with your muscles." Fors pursed her lips, leaned her head sideways, and smiled.

"Teasing me doesn't make you smarter..." Xio tried to smooth out her few strands of blonde hair that was sticking out. "Alright, let's head over to Empress Borough and tell Miss Audrey about this."

Fors nodded faintly and said, “So, what’s our emergency contact method with Miss Audrey?”

Xio was momentarily put at a loss. She looked afar at the tombstone as she said, “She told me that pet dog of hers we saw earlier walks herself at least five times a day. Well, the next walk should be after lunch.”

“In other words, we have to loiter around suspiciously outside Earl Hall’s luxurious manor?” The corner of Fors’s lips twitched.

Xio suddenly looked sideways and revealed an obsequious smile, “Fors, or would you prefer to just sneak in?

“I don’t think that would be difficult for you. It’s what you’re good at.”

“A hereditary count for centuries, one of the most influential parliament members in the House of Lords, the largest shareholder of Varvat Bank, the fourth largest shareholder of Backlund Bank, the special consultant of the Imperial Bank of Loen, the third largest shareholder of Suchit Bank in the Intis Republic, the second largest shareholder of Constant Coal and Steel Consortium, and so on. These are the titles of Miss Audrey’s father. Xio, use your brain; how could a man like that not employ any Beyonders? Would he not have any prized collections? This is different from those destitute viscounts and barons!” Fors replied in exasperation. “I swear in the name of God, if I were to sneak in, I would be discovered and caught within five minutes.”

Xio nodded continuously in agreement.

“Let’s wait for the golden retriever then...”

With that said, she led the way. After she took a few steps forward, she spoke with her back facing Fors, “Uh, well, I will compensate you for your losses and the damages in the future. I’m referring to the stone, of course.”

Listening to that, the corner of Fors’s lips lifted and she said, “I was saving myself.

“And, Xio, you’re going the wrong way!

“God, if you were an Apprentice and ended up becoming a

Traveler in the future, it would be a disaster!”

...

Outside Earl Hall’s luxurious manor.

Xio and Fors hid behind an Intis parasol tree and secretly observed their target building in silence, watching the people walking to and fro.

After God knows how long, they finally saw the golden retriever come out from a hidden hole under the wall. It pricked up its ears and looked to its left and right, appearing very cautious.

Just as Susie started taking its walk happily, a black male dog popped up from nowhere. It fawned on Susie and started running around in circles.

“This is the first time I’m seeing a dog show such a humanlike reaction. Just how much does it hate that black dog?” Xio sighed.

She could tell from Susie’s gaze and facial expression that there was obvious detest.

Fors smiled and said, “It’s just like encountering a rash, disgusting, and persistent lecher.”

Seeing Susie attempt to speed up to escape the black dog’s pursuit, Xio stood up to administer “Justice.”

“My ruling is for you to leave her alone!” Xio shouted with a mask of solemnity.

The black dog was taken aback and immediately scampered away with its tail between its legs.

Susie let out a breath of relief and slowed down. It barked politely and wagged its tail.

That was close, I nearly said "Thank you" to them... The golden retriever thought in joy.

That would've been a very awkward situation...

...

A melodic tune slowly came to a halt as Audrey picked up the latest intelligence Xio and Fors had delivered and read it with knitted brows.

She closed the piano cover and stood up elegantly. She paced back and forth in her piano room and considered her next course of action.

Qilangos is a very dangerous man... If Xio and Fors continued investigating, they might end up in danger... It might even expose me... Yes, I should just proceed according to their suggestion. Oh yeah, it's another two hours until the Tarot Club. I wonder what Mr. Fool would suggest? If he's still not interested, I'll discuss it with The Hanged Man carefully... Audrey gradually calmed herself down.

This was the first time she had encountered, or perhaps was described as being placed in such a perilous situation. There was already one death!

Three in the afternoon.

Audrey's vision recovered from a crimson and blurry state before seeing the boundless gray fog that didn't belong to reality, the lofty palace that looked like the home of a giant, the long ancient mottled bronze table, and The Fool who was always engulfed by a thick layer of fog. Lastly, she saw The Hanged Man and The Sun.

At that moment, Audrey's tense and anxious emotions seemed to relax—she felt so safe, so calm.

I'm participating in the Tarot Club that doesn't belong in the material world, and I'm dealing with Mr. Fool who's nearly a god. Qilangos and I are on different levels... Audrey sat in an upright position proudly. She lifted her chin slightly and greeted cheerfully, "Good afternoon, Mr. Fool! Good afternoon, Mr. Hanged Man! Good afternoon, Mr. Sun!"

After they greeted one another, Klein saw that Miss Justice was indicating her desire to speak; therefore, he nodded faintly to express his permission.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, I wonder if your Blessed has received the compensation of 300 pounds?" Audrey asked, holding back her urge to talk about Qilangos while she showed concern over her leader's Blessed.

Klein smiled and said, "I didn't pay close attention to this matter. But as my Blessed didn't request for additional help, I suppose he has already received it."

Yes, I've checked multiple times. There are 300 pounds lying in my anonymous bank account... Klein added in his head happily. "That's great!" Audrey relaxed and looked across her. "Mr. Hanged Man, there's been progress regarding Qilangos."

Alger suddenly sat up straight. He couldn't hide his excitement as he asked, "Where is he?"

"Unfortunately, he noticed our investigations just after we discovered his tracks. He killed one of the personnel involved." Audrey repeated the highlights of Xio's and Fors's story and explained their follow-up plan in detail.

Alger nodded faintly and said, "I'll pay close attention."

Then, he turned to the side and looked towards the seat of honor at the long bronze table. Under the vacant gaze of The Sun, Derrick, who listened but didn't understand anything, he said, "Honorable Mr. Fool, if I were to find out Qilangos' true intention and the very important and mystical item that he intends to obtain, please allow me to recite your name and inform you through the ritual."

He didn’t repeat his request for The Fool’s Blessed to provide him assistance. As he brought it up before and The Fool had given his answer, there was no need to harp on the topic. Otherwise, it might provoke the god.

Hence, Alger made it clear that his intention was only to report his findings.

If the final temptation was sufficient, he believed that Mr. Fool’s Blessed would definitely appear.

That works? Audrey widened her eyes.

I should’ve asked for the right to report as well. I might be able to gain Mr. Fool’s guidance occasionally... She thought with regret.

Under everyone’s gaze, Klein leaned back into his chair and nodded faintly. He replied slowly, “You may.”

Alger heaved a sigh of relief when he heard The Fool's answer. He lowered his head and humbly said, "Please allow me to thank you in advance."

That's because I'm also curious... curious about the item Qilangos is searching for. I want to know about the item that can allow a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed to have the strength of a Sequence 4... I'm also curious about what a pirate admiral is going to do in Backlund... Klein smiled, maintaining his profound posture.

It's not like I've promised to provide assistance after I hear your prayers! He emphasized in his heart.

But now, he was a lot more confident than before. Now, he had actual allies and the mysterious Mr. Azik who was currently in Backlund.

If it was absolutely necessary, Klein was willing to use the copper whistle to enlist the help of Azik. Of course, he definitely wouldn't mention the Tarot Club. He would probably say he got information from some random source.

There were still two problems that existed in this matter. First, Klein was only limited to a cooperative relationship with Azik. It wasn't necessarily the case that Azik would provide assistance unless he was interested in what Qilangos was doing or the mystical item that he was after.

Second, Klein was unsure of just how powerful Azik was. Even if he had made the assumption that Azik was a High-Sequence Beyonder, he had to consider the fact that his memory loss might have weakened his abilities. After all, knowledge was usually equated with power, and the lack of knowledge would definitely diminish Azik's power.

If that was the case, Klein couldn't guarantee that Azik could deal with Qilangos, especially with the latter wielding the Creeping Hunger. Klein was afraid that he would be placing Azik in danger so he was unwilling to trouble Azik unless he absolutely had to.

Now that I think about it, Mr. Azik's terrifying messenger can be summoned with the bronze whistle... No, that thing doesn't look like a messenger at all; it could take the role of an evil boss! So, even if Mr. Azik cannot beat the Creeping Hunger augmented Qilangos, he should be able to defend himself easily and have enough power left to save The Hanged Man, Miss Justice, and her partners... Klein shifted his posture as he thought, still leaning against the back of his chair. He propped his right leg over his left.

The Hanged Man Alger looked at The Fool and spoke once again, "I'm about to receive a batch of pages from Emperor Roselle's diary. I believe that I can present them to you in the next gathering, or the gathering after that."

According to the arrangement of the Church of Storms, Pritz Harbor was under the jurisdiction of the Backlund diocese. Thus, Alger could enter the capital and wait for Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos to show himself under the guise of reporting about his previous voyage.

Backlund had been the headquarters of the Church of Storms until the end of the last epoch, having shifted their holy altar to Pasu Island only after the establishment of the Loen Kingdom. Regardless, the status of the Church of Storms in Backlund was second only to the headquarters of the Seven Great Churches.

One could imagine the information the Church of Storms held.

Under these circumstances, Alger was confident that he would be able to collect pages of Emperor Roselle's diary in the name of research. After all, they were indecipherable at present.

Klein allowed joy to color his tone, as he said with a gentle nod, "Very good."

What he was really feeling right now was a mix of joy and worry. He was happy that he could see several pages of Emperor Roselle's diary soon. They might contain a lot of useful information, but he

was also worried about what he had to give The Hanged Man in return. After all, no one knew if The Hanged Man would be interested in the contents of the diary, or if the content was valuable enough.

Even a Seer is unable to determine that in advance... Must I really let my "Blessed" help him? Klein gave a silent sigh.

Audrey Hall hurriedly spoke up when she saw the conversation between The Hanged Man and The Fool end.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, may I recite your name and inform you using a ritual should I receive any timely and useful information?"

Timely... Look, Miss Justice's choice of words is so refined. Compared to her, you are too vulgar, The Hanged Man! Klein nodded slightly, saying past the fog, "You may." *Great!* Audrey secretly clenched her fists.

At the same time, Klein turned to look at The Sun, Derrick Berg, who had been silently listening to their conversations. He spoke, his tone was peaceful, "The same goes for you as well." "Yes, Mr. Fool." Derrick lowered his head.

The majestic palace was silent for a few seconds before Audrey spoke, "I need the complete pituitary gland of a Rainbow Salamander."

One of the main ingredients of the Telepathist potion? Hanged Man Alger nodded slightly as if he was contemplating.

"I don't have it. To be honest, I've only seen this creature in textbooks." The Sun, Derrick, heard the term automatically translated to him as Phantom Netherdrake.

What kind of textbook would discuss a supernatural creature? How envious... I can only get information like that at a Beyonder gathering, through word of mouth, or through a crumpled piece of paper. There's no system in place, and my search for knowledge lacks organization... I'll find a way to trade for the Sun's textbook in the future! Oh, he was interested in the formula for the Bard potion... Audrey thought, a little envious.

At that moment, Alger looked at The Fool, then retracted his gaze. He then looked opposite him and said in thought, "I might have a way of obtaining the complete pituitary gland of the Rainbow Salamander."

Without waiting for Audrey to speak, he added on, "But it's under the premise that Qilangos is found. When the time comes, the complete pituitary gland of the Rainbow Salamander would be equivalent to the extra compensation that I owe you. Miss Justice, you might not know, but these creatures are nearly extinct, and we can only find traces of them in primitive islands in the Sea of Fog, the Berserk Sea, or the Sonia Sea. Not many people have the coordinates to these Islands. Heh, if you're interested, we can make a deal, for I am one of the few who knows how to get there."

I'm also interested in those primitive islands... Klein silently listened to their conversation.

Thinking about the extinction of the Rainbow Salamander, he suddenly recalled the joke he cracked with Old Neil—the Dragons and Giants Protection Association. He let out a sigh in his heart.

Audrey became thrilled after hearing that. She fought back her emotions as she said, "I once dreamed of going on a voyage in search of these primitive islands to take in the history."

My Goddess, the Tarot Club is too powerful, too wonderful! To be able to recruit a member who has the coordinates of the primitive islands! Praise Mr. Fool! Audrey couldn't maintain her Spectator state as a smile crept across her face.

Primitive islands? Klein froze for a moment, then thought about a page of Emperor Roselle's diary that he had seen, the one where the Emperor described himself as a pirate king!

He said that he discovered an unnamed island with many supernatural creatures when he and his Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were traversing the Sea of Fog on an unsafe sea route.

Could that be the so-called primitive island? How unfortunate, the Great Emperor didn't include any coordinates in his diary. Perhaps the information will be in some future pages, but as of now, I haven't received any pages of his diary in chronological order... Klein was filled with regret and anticipation.

The Sun Derrick was already confused by the terms "Sea of Fog,""Berserk Sea,""Sonia Sea,""primitive island," etc.

He felt more and more certain that Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man belonged to a different world than he did.

After collecting herself for a few seconds, Audrey asked curiously, "Does the near-extinction of the Rainbow Salamander mean that the Spectator pathway will be severed soon?"

"No, there will definitely be substitute materials." Alger gave a definite answer.

"What substitute materials are there?" Audrey's eyes brightened as she asked.

Alger shook his head, replying without revealing certain profound truths, "I don't know. Perhaps the members of the Psychology Alchemists might know."

"Then how can you be so sure that there will be substitute ingredients?" Audrey didn't understand.

Alger laughed and said, "You will understand in time. Or do you have something to trade for the information right now?"

"I guess I'll wait." Audrey pouted and sighed. She also dismissed the idea of asking Mr. Fool.

There's no use in me knowing for the time being... The Hanged Man will definitely ask about something regarding Vice Admiral Hurricane, and I cannot be dragged too deep into that matter...

She suddenly felt like praising her intellect.

But what she never expected was that Mr. Fool was feeling very disappointed at that moment.

Klein was rather curious about the secrets which Alger's words held. Unfortunately, Miss Justice, who was the best assist all this while, didn't choose to go through with the transaction.

No matter what method they chose to perform a transaction, the contents of the deal couldn't be hidden from the owner of the fog!

Well, even if the Rainbow Salamander is nearing extinction, the Psychology Alchemists are still giving out formulas listing it as an ingredient instead of providing a substitute. Does this mean that the Psychology Alchemists are in possession of the coordinates of certain primitive islands? Or could they be working together with an organization that has the coordinates? Klein wondered.

After the end of the transaction discussions, Klein looked around, then turned to The Sun. He asked in a gentle tone, "Does the City of Silver still believe in gods?"

Klein was merely an official member of the Nighthawks and had no access to deeper mysticism knowledge. An example would be sacrificial rituals. Thus, in order to refine his understanding of performing sacrificing dedicated to himself, to move materials in the mysterious space above the gray fog, as a Sequence 8, Klein needed to learn it as soon as possible from other sources.

He came up with three methods after continuous consideration: First, he was going to ask Spirit Guide Daly, who was adept at ritualistic magic whilst also being a deacon. But this might invite suspicion from her; thus, Klein could only patiently wait for an opportunity. Second, he could ask Mr. Azik, but

Klein couldn't guarantee that he would be able to recall the knowledge in this area. Third, he was going to use a roundabout way to ask Sun, who lived in the City of Silver.

Klein already had an idea of how he was going to do it while effectively maintaining his image.

Whatever he asked would be tied to the gods!

Derrick replied in a respectful tone, "We still believe in the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God."

Upon hearing The Fool's question, Audrey perked up her ears and entered her Spectator state. She waited for The Sun to answer.

She had always been curious about where the City of Silver was and what was so special about that place, but she couldn't bring herself to ask. It touched upon his privacy after all.

At that moment, Mr. Fool was asking personally. It was like finishing the first volume of an outstanding detective novel she had been reading for a long time, and she finally had the chance to buy the next volume!

The Sun's answer didn't disappoint her. They didn't believe in the mainstream seven orthodox deities, nor did they believe in Death as the Southern Continent did. They also didn't believe in the hidden existences, evil gods or devils—Primordial Demoness, Hidden Sage, Dark Side of the Universe, Chained God, or the True Creator—which The Hanged Man had told her before.

The City of Silver is really special! They actually worship the Creator Himself! This is the primordial worship that Mr. Hanged Man described, right? Hmm, the description of omnipotence is a little strange... Audrey stole a glance at The Hanged Man subconsciously and realized that he was nodding slightly.

Klein wasn't surprised at all. He purposely chuckled and asked in reply, "Even though He abandoned you?"

Abandoned? The Creator abandoned the City of Silver? Alger was shocked. Suddenly when he suddenly made the connection regarding a particular term.

The Forsaken Land of God!

In the confidential information of the Church of Storms, at the security clearance level that Alger, who was Captain—equivalent to the Bishop level—could access, the Forsaken Land of God had always only been a name with no actual description. However, it clearly pointed towards the end of the Sonia Sea. From what he knew, even the Cardinals at the core of the church had no idea what the Forsaken Land of God represented. But only the leader of the church, the Proxy of the Lord of Storms, knew something about the situation and seemed to be taking charge of the hidden mission to look for the Forsaken Land of God.

Alger had once made a bold guess when he equated the True Creator's holy residence which was promoted by the Aurora Order with the Forsaken Land of God. But, unfortunately, The Fool hadn't confirmed his guess, so he couldn't be sure.

Now, he was shocked and surprised to find that the Tarot Club member using The Sun as his code name was very likely from the Forsaken Land of God!

Mr. Fool knew where the Forsaken Land of God was all this time, and he could pull someone from there to be a member of the Gathering! This is a hidden place that the Church of Storms has been trying to find to no avail!

Alger looked at The Fool who was seated in the seat of honor at the end of the ancient long bronze table in horror. He could only see that he was leaning back in his chair in silence, engulfed by the thick fog.

Audrey wasn't particularly moved about it. The only time that she had heard about the Forsaken Land of God was from The Hanged Man's question. She wasn't particularly interested, so she failed to associate it to anything from what Mr. Fool said earlier.

The City of Silver has the legend about being abandoned by the Creator... Huh, Mr. Hanged Man seems to be deeply affected... What is he amazed and afraid of? Audrey nodded in puzzlement as she remembered the details of the moment.

"Yes, we believe that we will regain the Lord's favor in the end. Perhaps, it will be on the day the sun rises again," Derrick Berg answered in an uncertain tone. "We were once ruled by the giants' royal family, and we worshiped the Giant King Aurmir. Later, we were saved by the Lord and we will never betray the Lord again."

Ruled by the giants' royal family... It really is ancient. But it doesn't seem to match... Alger, who had guessed at something, suddenly recalled the description about the Second Epoch in the hidden chapter of The Book of Storms.

The Second Epoch was also known as humanity's Dark Epoch. At the time, the sky, ocean, and land were ruled over by dragons, giants, elves, mutants, devils, phoenixes, demonic wolves, and dead spirits. But in the end, the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom led humanity into defeating the supernatural creatures and ushered in the beginning of the Third Epoch, the Glorious Era, which was later known as Cataclysm.

Giant King Aurmir... Klein repeated the name in silence.

In various legends and myths, it was a great existence on par with the deities. Even now, there were still some places that worshiped him. Even the most famous and most expensive grape wine in the Intis Republic was named after Aurmir. It was said that the Giant King particularly fancied grape wine which was like blood.

Considering the fact that the Church of the God of Combat is in control of the complete pathway of the Warrior, which once belonged to the giants, can I assume that Aurmir was the ancient God of Combat? Klein guessed.

He nodded deliberately but didn't think any further about it. He then asked calmly, "Do you still offer sacrifices to this omnipotent God?"

"Yes, we still do. But since the day we were abandoned, we have never gotten any response." Derrick's voice had a hint of unconcealed pain.

Klein leaned against the back of his chair leisurely. He halfclosed his eyes and said, "Describe the process of your offering ritual in detail."

Does Mr. Fool want to figure out the truth behind the City of Silver's abandonment? Or does He want to determine if the Creator still exists? Alger suddenly felt a shock through his body and he quivered.

Not only was he afraid, but he was also excited too. This was because he felt he was being made privy to the secrets between deities!

That made him feel like he had been elevated to a whole new level!

I've been chasing after power, after strength. Didn't I do it to achieve this kind of feeling? Alger leaned back, lifted his chin, and got carried away with his thoughts.

Mr. Hanged Man's mental state doesn't seem to be normal... Audrey looked at him with pity.

She finally understood that there might be some sort of shocking secret behind the communication between Mr. Fool and The Sun, which led to The Hanged Man's loss of composure.

After the Qilangos commission is over, I'll pay the price to get information about what Mr. Hanged Man learned today... I wonder if he would be willing to... Audrey thought in anticipation, yet was still a little worried.

Derrick didn't notice the weight that was hanging on his answer as he replied frankly, "We build opulent altars covered in the Lord's symbol. Every time we receive a bumper Black-Faced Grass harvest, we hold a sacrificial ritual.

"We use the monsters we capture in the depths of the darkness to use as sacrificial offerings. After we recite God's honorable title and the necessary prayers, we dance for Him and then kill the monsters,

to let their spirituality and tainted blood dye the entire altar. If we haven't caught any monsters, then we use a sinner on the lowest floor in the City of Silver prison instead.

"Then, we turn the very first batch of Black-Faced Grass into food and serve it before the Lord.

"In the end, we sing praises in unison and end the ritual."

Since I was planning to offer a sacrifice to myself, I'm not picky about time, and the altar can be as simple as possible. The most important part would be to open a channel with the aid of the monsters' spirituality or the blood containing Beyonder powers to complete the sacrifice offering. Of course, this is under the premise that one will receive a response? How extravagant... Klein used his mysticism knowledge to analyze every step of the sacrificial ritual in the City of Silver before finally saying, "What are the corresponding prayers? What language do you recite them in?"

Derrick was also looking forward to this, so as to gain hints from Mr. Fool on how to shake off the curse, so he recalled it carefully and answered, "We use Jotun, which is also our common language.

"The corresponding prayers are,

"'Your devoted believers pray for your attention.

"We pray for you to take their offerings.

"We pray for you to open the gates to your Kingdom.'"

...

Klein listened in silence and intentionally let the engulfing fog slowly swirl around him. He nodded as though deep in thought and remained silent.

As for what he learned from it, he obviously wouldn't share it...

Alger found it very normal. How could the secrets of a deity be revealed directly to a mortal? Derrick also steeled his resolve to quickly grow in power, so that he could obtain something that could garner Mr. Fool's interest in exchange for his guidance.

After some more communication, Klein ended the gathering. He watched Justice's, The Hanged Man's, and The Sun's figures vanish before him.

He looked down and saw the boundless gray fog and crimson stars that seemed eternally immutable.

However, after he advanced to Sequence 8, he realized that he could connect even more stars. In other words, he could pull in more members.

At least two... Klein nodded indiscernibly.

He wasn't in a hurry to add new members. He planned to act as he had before. He would first wait and observe. If Justice and The Hanged Man had any recommendations, he could assess them first.

What I saw the last few times was when The Sun was praying. There was a clear crystal ball before him, but ever since I pulled him into the world above the gray fog, that crystal ball has never appeared again... Does the prerequisite needed to pull people in through the connection of the crimson star have something to do with having a special item around them? Or does every crimson star correspond to an item in reality, which, when it's connected successfully, it would return to the world above the gray fog?

I wonder if Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man were the same... Let's just assume that's the case. In that case, if people without this special item were to recite: "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck." and allow me to hear their prayers, would I be able to pull them in?

I can give it a try in the future.

Klein didn’t stay any longer. He wrapped himself with spirituality and stimulated a descent, leaving behind the lofty palace, the ancient table, and the twenty-two high-back chairs which sat immutably above the gray fog.

He had mastered the overflowing power of the Clown potion and eliminated the corresponding negative effects. Therefore, he wanted to try the ritual to summon himself!

I wonder what I’ll conjure this time... Klein thought in anticipation and fear as he fell through the mad ravings.

Klein didn't hurry to dispel the wall of spirituality when he returned to his room. Instead, he expertly took out a candle infused with sandalwood and placed it in the middle of his desk.

He then followed the steps for the ritual, lighting up the candle with his spirituality and scattering essences, extract, and herb powder herbs symbolizing good luck and mystery. He saw the flame alternate between being dull and bright as he took in the fragrance of peace and harmony.

Klein took two steps back and looked at the candle on the table. He then shouted in the language of the giants, "I!"

After a pause, he switched to Hermes, "I summon in my name:

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

At that moment, the flickering flame fused itself with the harmonious scent to form an illusory vortex, a vortex that manically absorbed the spirituality.

After Klein finished reciting the incantations, the vortex stabilized to become a palm-sized circle of grayish-white fog.

After observing the fog, Klein took four steps counterclockwise without hesitation. He returned to the world above the fog, and as he expected, he saw ripples of light spreading from his highback chair, accentuating the mysterious aura of the weird symbol—the Pupil-less Eye and partially Contorted Lines—on his chair.

He took in a deep breath and calmed his soul down using Cogitation before extending his hand toward the target.

At that moment, he heard the incantations that he had just recited. He saw the surging spirituality and the rippling light fuse to form an illusory door.

Compared to the previous time, the door was now completely formed and was etched full of mysterious patterns!

The patterns were the same as the symbol on the back of The Fool's chair, a symbol made up of the Pupil-less Eye and the partially Contorted Lines!

As he looked at the door, Klein focused his mind and willed the door open.

Without warning, ripples formed in the eternally immutable grayish-white fog and the majestic palace, like a stone being cast in a peaceful pond. The ripple spread in the direction of the Door of Summoning.

The sound of heavy scraping sound caused by friction could suddenly be heard. A slit appeared in the heavy, mysterious door. Beyond it, one could faintly see an immensely dark world, filled with countless indescribable, transparent figures. There were also streaks of different colors, lustrous splendour that harbored infinite knowledge.

At that moment, Klein felt an unimaginable, irresistible attractive force coming from beyond the door. He couldn't help but get pulled towards it.

Damn! Are you not giving me the choice? Just as he had that alarming thought, his body went through the slit and vanished into the darkness behind the door.

The dizzying, maniacal roars gradually died down. Klein finally came to his senses.

He saw a young man in front of him. The man was wearing an old shirt, had black hair, brown eyes, and average-looking facial features. The man had an average build, was a little skinny, but his frame seemed to hide considerable power. He also had the obvious demeanor of a scholar.

...Isn't that me? Klein wasn't a stranger to scenes like this. He encountered something like this every time he looked in the mirror.

He nodded indiscernibly and surveyed his surroundings. He saw his bed with a white bedsheet draped over it. He saw his half top hat, tuxedo, and black trench coat hanging on his clothes rack. He saw a bookshelf with quite a number of books, his neat table that only had one candle on it. He saw the candle flame emitting a grayish-white glow.

And now, he was floating in front of the palm-sized circle of grayish-white fog.

So, have I really summoned myself? It feels a little like an out-ofbody experience... but there's also something a little different. Klein looked at the physical body belonging to him, toward "his" blank, vacant eyes and slipped into deep thought.

But he could finally confirm one thing: it was only his spiritual soul, also known as his Soul Body in mysticism, that headed to the world of fog. The exterior appearance was that of the Astral Projection.

It's no wonder that I can directly see the Astral Projection surface of Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun and confirm whether they were Beyonders or not when I was in the world above the fog. I could also guess their Sequence numbers... My physical body seems to be under some form of protection, perhaps from the power of the ritual, for me to stand with such stability and not lose my balance. It should be the same for Miss Justice and the others... Klein slowly got used to the current situation and started to analyze the conditions of both his physical body and soul.

He retracted his gaze and tried to move his soul, now fused with powers from the mysterious space.

Whoosh!

A cold wind started to blow, as it spiraled around the room. Klein savored the sensation of flying, joyfully making circles in the room.

I can also take on the role of a "messenger" in this city now... I wonder if I can carry physical items with me... He collected himself and stopped. He floated in the air and experimented with his other abilities.

He tried to grab a notebook from his bookshelf, but his hand passed through it.

It feels a little sticky, it's not like moving through air... I might be able to grab it after I become more powerful and able to better utilize the mysterious powers of the world above the gray fog. Klein once again tried grabbing a single piece of paper but to no avail.

After more than ten seconds of deliberation, he flew toward the clothes rack and extended his transparent hand into the pocket of his black trench coat. He touched the Slumber Charms and the Requiem Charms that he replenished from a successful claim.

They were objects infused with his own spirituality, different from ordinary objects in supernatural terms. Thus, Klein wanted to see if he could carry them about.

His palm once again went through the charms, but he could clearly feel their existence. He felt the intertwining of spirituality, but he didn't have enough "strength" to pick them up. Of course, another explanation was that there wasn't enough spirituality within the charms to achieve a strong resonance with his current state.

The spirituality isn't strong enough... Klein thought as he moved towards the other pocket. That pocket stored the Flaring Sun Charms that he made with the stolen power of the divine blood and his own spirituality.

A warm sensation quickly spread all over his body, making his form turn more stable and his thoughts clearer.

He could take the thin gold piece out of his pocket. In the mirror in his room, the charm seemed to float out of the pocket on its own accord, similar to the descriptions in ghost stories.

I can move Flaring Sun Charms. I can also create sound using my spirituality... So I do have certain abilities in this state... Klein flew toward the mirror and stopped in front of it. He saw that only the thin gold piece was reflected. Other than that, it was only the furniture and darkness in the room caused by the drawn curtains.

After a few seconds of consideration, he placed the Flaring Sun Charm onto the bed before returning to the front of the mirror. He wanted to see if he could move through the mirror.

His vision turned dark. Klein's vantage point suddenly changed. He saw the room that was reflected in the mirror, the furniture that was accentuated by the weak sources of light. It made him feel as though he was hiding in an obscure corner, peeping into a tiny portion of the room.

I really can go through the mirror. But this is only an ordinary item which doesn't lead to some mysterious and strange world... Klein nodded and charged forward, once again returning to his room.

The success of carrying the Flaring Sun Charm gave him immense confidence. Hence, he attempted grabbing something else.

Mr. Azik's copper whistle!

The moment he touched the ancient and intricate object, he felt his spirituality expanding and freezing.

His illusory eyes turned into dark, burning flames.

It feels like I have gotten a little more powerful. My form is like a wraith's but without the strong sense of vengeance... Klein projected his current appearance by calming his mind.

This was one of the abilities of a Clown.

"Mr. Azik's copper whistle is truly fascinating." He nodded, noticing that he could now pick up pieces of paper with certain weights. He could also pick up his Slumber Charms.

How unfortunate. I can carry the silver ritual dagger, but the revolver is too heavy... Klein concluded his experiments and turned to see if he could use any spells in this state.

After serious tests, he concluded that he could conjure two spells, the first being a formless howl could shake the souls of his target and the second was inducing a state akin to freezing via contact with a target.

Klein came to a satisfied stop. He looked out the oriel window, towards the sunlight, and street covered by the curtain.

I wonder if I can move about during the day in this state... He muttered as he floated towards the window.

He then carefully lifted the curtain, creating a slit and allowing a small amount of sunlight to pass through the wall of spirituality and into the room.

Under the radiant sunlight, Klein felt his soul boil with a black fog. His powers were also being drained away, bit by bit.

He quickly released his grip, allowing the curtain to block the light.

I can't... Klein thought for a moment, then placed his gaze on the Flaring Sun Charm on the bed.

I wonder if the effect would be the same if I'm augmented with the divine blood of the Eternal Blazing Sun? He floated toward the bed and tried to grab the thin piece of gold.

But just as he touched the charm, the warm pure feeling formed a stark contrast with his burgeoning cold spirituality. It was like an existential conflict between fire and water.

Sizzle!

He tossed the piece of gold away as if he had been burned.

The power of Mr. Azik's copper whistle cannot inhabit my soul at the same time as the Flaring Sun Charm. Klein understood as he set the copper whistle down. He felt his spirituality shrink, and the black flames in his eyes extinguished.

In this state, both the spells I can use have been weakened... After another round of experimentation, Klein grabbed the Flaring Sun Charm, once again feeling the stabilizing and warm purifying effects the charm had on his Spirit Body.

He returned to the window and cautiously moved through the curtain.

The sunlight only felt warm on his body, but it didn't inflict any harm.

Not bad... Klein let out a mixed smile. He made his way past the wall of spirituality and cautiously flew out of the house with the intention of conducting more experiments.

The weather in Tingen turned from refreshing cool to a bitingly chill in early September. However, the sunlight at three or four in the afternoon was still warm and soothing.

Klein went through the wall of spirituality and the oriel window. He floated in the air outside of his bedroom as he overlooked the people and carriages shuttling to and fro Daffodil Street.

Just then, there was a man in a gray labor uniform who suddenly lifted his head and looked over.

Klein panicked and wanted to hide, but he couldn't find any suitable cover.

When he didn't see anything to hide behind, he started to sneak back into his house. However, from the corner of his eye, he saw the man earlier merely glanced over the window. Then, his gaze followed a flying sparrow, but unfortunately, he lost sight of it.

In Tingen, birds could occasionally be seen.

Phew... I forgot that an ordinary person wouldn't be able to see me... Klein let out a breath of relief and felt that he had yet to get used to the situation.

As he grew more confident, he flew lower and went to a nearby spacious street where he floated above people's heads.

As he drew closer, Klein immediately realized that his "vision" was the same as his Spirit Vision. There was no need for him to activate it, but there was a restriction to its range.

Also, besides the aura and emotional colors, he could faintly feel the existence of everyone's soul. They were blurry, illusory, and transparent.

In this state, I think I could bypass a person's body and directly attack their soul... Klein nodded thoughtfully.

He circled around and prepared to test his fastest speed. Hence, he flew towards Iron Cross Street with all his strength.

It didn't take long before he came to a halt and arrived outside the apartment he used to stay in.

It should be about the speed of a car on the highway... It's a pity that I still can't go in and out of the spirit world; otherwise, it'd be perfect... But if I were to be lost in the spirit world, it's said that the consequences are very severe. Just as Klein finished his selfevaluation, he felt low-spirited and gloomy. There was an unspoken pressure.

He looked around and felt that Iron Cross Street was engulfed with gloominess that ordinary people could see, a darkness that the sunlight couldn't dispel. There were layers of numbness, despair, pain, and other emotions overlapping, as though they were corporeal.

It feels just like what I experienced when using spiritual perception on this street when I first became a Seer. Iron Cross Street's Middle Street and Lower Street hasn't changed to this day... I wonder how many years it took to accumulate such oppression and gloominess... Klein recalled the past and sighed as he flew up to the third floor of the surrounding buildings.

He finally felt sunlight and shook off his depression.

Klein flew along Lower Street and, from time to time, he would see residents who were dressed in tattered clothes, looking expressionless and malnourished. He even ran into two bodies that had died of natural causes—prolonged starvation and malnutrition with a sudden infliction of an illness.

There were countless people who died in agony every month. However, the bankrupt farmers and slaves that surged in from the Southern Continent replaced them very quickly... Klein sighed in silence and changed direction and flew south.

That was the industrial area of Tingen. The steelworks, lead factories, ceramic factories, printing factories, metalworks factories, machine construction factories, and other factories all built right next to one another.

As he flew, Klein saw towering chimneys. He saw dust filling the air and a thick gloominess that was only slightly better than the that of Lower Street.

It was crowded with emotions of exhaustion, pain, pessimism, and numbness. Laborers who were in their thirties were considered the minority.

Just as Klein wanted to fly lower to look at the area more closely, he suddenly felt weak. It was a weakness that came from inside him.

My spirituality can't withstand the duress... Klein became alarmed. He was in a hurry to return home, but he suddenly thought of a better possibility.

I was "summoned" out. If I were to end the summon, I would return naturally! He calmed down and carefully felt the surrounding environment and his status. Unsurprisingly, he discovered something that was connected to him from infinitely far away but also infinitely close to him. It formed an intricate tether to him.

Through this connection, Klein clenched the Flaring Sun Charm tightly and willed the strong desire to end the "summoning."

A massive and terrifying suction force overwhelmed him as his figure went from transparent to nearly invisible, and in a flash, he vanished from the corporeal world.

...

Silence was everywhere in the boundless gray fog, and there were illusory crimson stars that twinkled. Klein reappeared in the lofty palace that looked like the home of a giant, as he sat in the seat of honor at the ancient bronze table.

The entire procedure went well... Furthermore... Klein looked at his Spirit Body in pleasant surprise and saw that it contained a warm and pure gold portion.

The Flaring Sun Charm!

I actually brought something corporeal into the world above the gray fog! He held the charm with a smile and fiddled with it to make sure it wasn't an illusory item.

Klein stood up and paced back and forth, feeling completely gratified. He thought to himself in anticipation.

As expected, ingredients and items can be brought into this mysterious space!

I just need to find the correct way!

However, this method is quite complicated. It needs me to do quite a bit before it reaches the destination. Furthermore, if I were to be summoned by the members all the time, it would damage The Fool's image. I can only do that occasionally, or after I understand it more. I can design an incantation that summons The Fool's "Blessed," but it will similarly be directed at me...

...I'm not some born laborer. Why must the incantation point towards me? When the time comes, I can conjure what seems like a messenger or a more unique "Blessed" and let it deal with the dispatch and collection of materials...

Ideas popped up one after another as Klein contemplated. But due to the limitation of his capabilities and knowledge, he couldn't put them into practice just yet.

As he became even weaker, Klein didn't dare to stay any longer. He used his spirituality to envelop himself and simulate the feeling of descending.

In the blink of an eye, he returned to his bedroom. He saw splendid sunlight pouring in through the gap in his curtains.

He examined his body and made sure that the Flaring Sun Charm wasn't brought back but left above the gray fog.

When I've gotten enough rest, I'll repeat the summoning ritual at dawn to bring the Flaring Sun Charm back to reality... Sigh, it would be great if I could maintain the state a little longer. That way, I would be able to investigate the houses with red chimneys. It's such a pity that I can't do it yet. I could only fly long enough to investigate a few houses before having to return above the gray fog and rest for half a day. The efficiency would be just as low. Klein walked before his desk and put out the silent burning candle.

After he packed his things, he didn't remove the wall of spirituality immediately. Instead, he sat down and took out a pen and paper to write a letter—a letter to Mr. Azik!

After he wrote the salutation of "Dear Sir," he pondered for a few minutes before penning:

"...I recently received news that one of the Seven Pirate Admirals, Vice Admiral Hurricane, Qilangos, has infiltrated Backlund. He carries a mystical item called the 'Creeping Hunger.' It provides an ability similar to a Shepherd, which is a Sequence 5 Beyonder that swallows different souls and obtains their corresponding powers. It's said that there is a limit to the number of souls for Grazing, but the souls can be swapped out...

"...Qilangos seems to have many Beyonder powers, and I'm not sure what he's trying to do in Backlund... The news I received suggested that he might be after a very important, very mystical item that could make Qilangos a High-Sequence Beyonder or as powerful as a High-Sequence Beyonder..."

Klein fabricated his source of information to generally describe the situation with Qilangos, but it wasn't like Mr. Azik would look for a Nighthawk Captain to confirm it.

Klein didn't directly request assistance but made it seem like he brought up the subject casually to encourage Azik to be careful.

Regardless of whether Mr. Azik was willing to help, it wouldn't hurt to first lay the foundations! If Klein eventually needed to ask for help, it wouldn't appear out of the blue that way! Klein let out a breath slowly and started writing the main content of the letter.

"The mastermind behind all that has happened hasn't taken any further action, and I still haven't found any related clues.

"The reason why I'm contacting you so suddenly is mainly to ask for your guidance regarding sacrificial rituals. I came across something like that during a recent mission..."

With The Sun's description and Mr. Azik's answer to compare, I should be able to try a sacrificial ritual after that. By reversing the ritual, I should be able to bestow items... This would be a more suitable ritual for exchanging ingredients and items rather than summoning myself... Yes, let's hope that Mr. Azik remembers the knowledge about this... Klein nodded slightly. He put down his pen without signing his name.

There's only one copper whistle, so I'm sure Mr. Azik wouldn't make a mistake with the sender.

Therefore, to be careful, Klein didn't leave his name.

After he folded the letter, he looked at his three-meter-tall ceiling. He picked up the copper whistle from the bed a little hesitantly.

Perfect, let it squat and get the letter! Klein emphasized inwardly before lifting his right hand and putting the copper whistle to his lips. He puffed up his cheeks and blew hard.

The whistle didn't produce a sound, but Klein's acute senses noticed that the surroundings had instantly turned cold.

He activated his Spirit Vision and saw that there were blurry yet glistening white bones surging out of his study desk like a fountain as it rose in height.

The white bones quickly gathered together and turned into an illusory yet huge monster. Its head tore through the wall of spirituality and reached somewhere unknown.

Klein looked at the white skeleton's thighs and body, as well as its arm that hung down. Seeing its right palm open up, the corner of Klein's lips twitched as he tossed over the folded letter.

The large bony palm did a sweep and caught the letter firmly.

Then, Klein picked up his copper whistle and blew again without hesitation.

The monster crumbled in an instant, transforming into bones that fell onto his desk before sinking in and vanishing.

After doing all of that, Klein removed the wall of spirituality. In the sudden wind that stirred, he hobbled towards the clothes rack and returned the copper whistle to its original place.

Then, he quickly walked to his bed and planted his head into it.

The moment his body touched the soft mattress, he fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER 183: A LESSON ON MEDIUMSHIP

After dinner, Klein engaged in small talk before reclining on the sofa. He picked up the recently delivered Awwa Evening News and started leisurely reading.

Benson wore a bitter expression as he sat opposite his sister. In front of him was the dining table which had been wiped clean by Bella. On it was grammar books, classic literature, accountancy notes, and other materials. In front of Melissa were her notes and stationery, including but not limited to pens, paper, rulers, compasses, etc.

"It's like I've been taken some ten years back. Back then, I was still a student at the Church's Sunday school," Benson complained, but he continued to study with his head down.

That's not too bad. This scene makes me feel the achievement of being a parent... Klein smiled and said, "Knowledge can change one's destiny, and diligence will result in glory."

I made up the latter half of that saying. I wonder if Roselle has said that before... He lampooned in his heart.

The room quickly became quiet except for the sound of pens scratching across pages or of books being flipped. Bella had finished doing the dishes and tidied up the kitchen before returning to her room on the first floor—a small room that was formerly the guest room.

Klein sipped on his Sibe black tea as he read the newspaper, occasionally engaging in small talk with his siblings. It was relaxing.

Suddenly, the gas lamps in the living room and dining room turned dark at the same time as if they had run out of fuel.

Benson and Melissa looked up towards the lamps, in an attempt to figure out the cause.

Klein also looked towards the lamps.

At this moment, he felt something touch his arm.

He was the only living person in the living room, but something had touched his arm!

His hair stood on end. Klein retracted his arm and turned to look over. He saw five thin, pale fingers growing on the tip of a tongue. Underneath them was an irregular row of sharp teeth!

Klein instinctively reached for his pockets. Within them were the Requiem Charms and Slumber Charms. But he caught a glimpse of a neatly folded piece of paper in the fingers' grasp.

A letter...

A messenger!

Klein heaved a sigh of relief.

At that moment, the five pale fingers prodded his arm again.

Klein saw Melissa about to stand up and check on the gas lamp. He reached out with his left hand and grabbed the letter, then he quickly retracted his arm and hid the letter under the stack of newspapers on the table.

He then saw the fingers, tongue, and the irregular row of sharp teeth fade away and disappear from the corner of his eyes.

With a thought, Klein tapped his left molar and silently activated his Spirit Vision.

He once again saw the five abnormally thin fingers. He saw the long red tongue adorned with sharp, white teeth. He saw them retracting back into the transparent face on the ground.

A second later, the face disappeared completely. The lights in the living room and dining room were restored back to normal.

"Strange..." Melissa pouted, finding no faults with the lamps even after a serious check.

Why is the lady in our house responsible for such things, while the men watch from the side? Klein shook his head and deactivated his Spirit Vision.

When spirits were willing to be seen and had the corresponding abilities, even an ordinary person could spot them. What happened just now was an example.

After discussing the problem with the gas lamps, the Moretti siblings became quiet once again. Benson and Melissa once again delved into the ocean of knowledge.

Klein used the newspaper as a cover and unfolded the letter with one hand. He placed the paper between the newspapers and started reading the reply from Spirit Guide Daly, "...I have to emphasize again, I prefer the title of Spirit Medium.

"I'm going to give you an positive response regarding what you asked. Yes, mediumship rituals can also be used on living beings, not just living humans.

"But this is troublesome and poses some level of danger. The souls left behind by the dead are pure. They have few impurities or chaotic thoughts. We can communicate with them, asking them questions and receiving answers without any barriers. Of course, you can use the method of dream divination to directly receive images from them.

"But that cannot be replicated with living humans. The subject still has a will and would fight against unprotected communication between souls."

Klein's lips twitched when he read the letter. He confirmed that it was Daly herself who wrote this letter.

Unprotected communication... That really is the way she speaks...

Klein returned to the letter after taking a quick glance at his siblings.

"We only have two methods when faced with such a situation. First, we can use our powerful spirituality and sophisticated mediumship rituals to triumph over the will of the other person, engaging in a barbaric method of communication. Second, we can use medication to make the other party relax. What I use the most are the Amantha essence and Eye of the Spirit medication. Heh heh, I'm sure that you still have a lingering impression of those.

"After reaching the stage of channeling the soul, you must take note that you're also in a spiritual state, unlike when you're communicating with the souls left behind by the dead. In simpler terms, your spirituality is entering the spirituality world of the other party.

"Take note, a professional Spirit Medium wouldn't lack the means of protecting themselves under such a state. But you cannot do that. You would not be able to learn or use the techniques that I know of even if I explained them to you.

"So you have to maintain a certain level of lucidity and rational thought. Only through this method can you fight back against the torrents of the other party's random and chaotic thoughts before arriving before his spirit and establishing communication. At this point, you'll be communicating at the level of the Body of Heart and Mind.

"At this stage, you have two options. One is to use a technique to forcefully read the memories of the other party, but you have to be very careful, for you cannot be sure if the things you're reading are the things that you want to know. If you indiscriminately receive a large amount of memories from a person, it's very likely that your soul would collapse. Furthermore, it will cause severe damage to your target's soul, sometimes even destroying them completely. Unless you're a professional Spirit Medium, I do not suggest using this method.

"The second option is to gently communicate with the other party's Body of Heart and Mind. No matter how you entered, whether it be through violence or medication, the target will definitely be in a groggy state. They would generally not be able to lie, just like you couldn't... no, you cannot recall what happened to you! Although I know you've definitely forgotten about it!"

Sorry, Madam Daly, I was very awake back then... Klein chortled inwardly as he lowered his gaze and read the rest of the letter.

"Such communication can allow you to obtain real answers, but they won't necessarily all be the truth. You should understand what I mean. As long as you read the news, you must have heard Emperor Roselle's famous quote. I don't remember the actual quote, but the essence of the quote is that what one says shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In short, a spirit might not remember everything because a lot of memories are in one's subconscious or collectively be in the subconscious. Oh, I shouldn't mention that. Dunn calls it the evil theories of the Psychology Alchemists.

"Thus, you must be able to guide the soul and be good at designing your questions, do you understand? The corresponding techniques include...

"These are all under normal circumstances. What should we pay attention to when we're trying to communicate with the soul of a Beyonder who has gone insane?

"It's the same—maintaining your lucidity. You must not fall into a daze at all. This is because a Beyonder's spirituality is very potent and their spirit is filled with chaotic thoughts. Let me give an example. An ordinary person's consciousness is an island. The subconscious is the portion of the sea beneath the island. The collective subconscious is the surrounding sea. The sky belongs to the spirit world. As for a Beyonder, his 'island' might have a controllable active volcano. A lunatic's island might have a volcano that can erupt at any time. It would quake the foundations and pollute the 'sea.'

"When you come into unprotected contact with the spirit of an insane person, his chaotic thoughts might infect you, just like how polluted water in the sea would flow outward, spreading further.

"Yes, channeling his spirit under such conditions is like linking your 'sea' to his; thus, you need to pay close attention to this pollution.

"A few examples are when a Spirit Medium is careless when doing similar things and didn't use any protection. After that, they can develop mental problems similar to that of the target.

"Under normal circumstances, mental diseases are not contagious. But in the domain of mysticism, in the world of channeling spirits, they can indeed be contagious.

"Maintaining your lucidity and not being affected by the chaotic thoughts of the target are things that you must pay attention to. Following those would be the guided questions, which can be used to effectively communicate with an insane person.

"If you wish to try this, I suggest applying a Serenity Agent before doing so. The corresponding formula is available behind Tingen City's Chanis Gate. There's also the formulated product. It can be effective in helping you maintain rational thought during the process.

"Of course, you can also get Dunn to apply for help from the Backlund diocese. I'm very willing to see the spirituality state of an insane Sequence 7 Psychiatrist."

Lucidity and rational thought... That's my expertise. I maintained lucidity and rational thought even when my soul was being channeled... Of course, I'm not someone who lets confidence get to my head. I'll still apply for the Serenity Agent, Amantha extract, and Eye of the Spirit medication! Klein heaved a sigh of relief, a little eager to make the attempt.

He put down his newspaper and stood up. He then entered the bathroom and ignited the letter with his spirituality before tossing the ashes into the toilet bowl and flushing them.

That night, Klein once again tried the ritual for summoning himself and brought the Flaring Sun Charm back to the physical world and into his room.

He also didn't receive Mr. Azik's letter even though he had expected a swift reply.

Perhaps he needed some time to recall the knowledge... or perhaps, he's not free to give a reply for now... Or perhaps he's worried that he would interrupt my sleep. Klein dispelled the wall of spirituality as he speculated. He made his way to the bed.

...

The following day, Tuesday morning.

Klein entered the Blackthorn Security Company and knocked on the door to the Captain's office as usual.

"Please come in," Dunn Smith said with a mellow and pleasant voice.

Klein turned the doorknob and pushed open the door to see the Captain having his breakfast. In his right hand was a cup of coffee emitting a rich aroma. On the plate in front of him, there was white bread toast and bacon.

Dunn placed the remaining sandwiched toast with butter into his mouth and ate it. He then silently pointed to the chair opposite his desk.

Klein didn't disturb his Captain from enjoying his breakfast. With a smile, he sat down as he waited patiently.

Dunn saw that he was in no hurry, so he relaxed back into his chair, picked up his coffee to take a sip, and swallowed the food in his mouth.

He took a napkin, wiped the corners of his lips and said, "What's the matter?"

Klein nodded seriously and said, "I've met Daxter Guderian, the doctor at the asylum and also member of the Psychology Alchemists."

As he spoke, he caught a glimpse of the magazine that was spread open before the Captain.

"Did he provide any news?" Dunn asked, crossing his arms.

Klein simply described, "He told me that before Hood Eugen went crazy, there was someone who visited him quite frequently. That person's name is Lanevus."

"Lanevus..." Dunn massaged his temples. "I seem to have heard

of it before..."

"He's the cheat who swindled at least ten thousand pounds," Klein reminded him.

Dunn thought for a while with a serious look on his face. He then shook his head to show that he had no memory of it.

Captain, you're not sensitive at all when it comes to money! Klein lampooned and told him the related story about Lanevus by highlighting the main points.

"The cheat falsely claimed that he had prospected and purchased an iron mine with rich deposits of iron ore. He raised funds from private individuals in Tingen and swindled more than ten thousand pounds. Someone I know from the Divination Club suffered a loss from this. In addition, a young woman was swindled into an engagement with him and is now pregnant with his child."

"He visited Hood Eugen multiple times before he went crazy," Dunn said in thought. "Sequence 8 Beyonder, Swindler? The Marauder pathway..."

Captain, your memory is actually good when it comes to this kind of thing... Klein found it funny as he reflected over it. He nodded faintly and said, "That was my guess as well.

"Because the steelworks company that Lanevus set up was in the South and the victims were of several different beliefs, the case wasn't passed to us in the end. Even if there had been evidence of Beyonder involvement in the case, it would've been passed over to the Mandated Punishers."

Dunn finally understood the ins and outs of the story. He looked at Klein with his deep gray eyes and said, "What do you want to do?"

Cough, Captain, can you please not be so sensitive... Klein replied with a mask of solemnity, "I want to talk to Hood Eugen via a mediumship ritual and figure out why Lanevus came looking for him. I want to know if that visit is directly related to him going insane."

Dunn nodded slightly and said, “Even if you hadn’t applied to do it, I would’ve had a similar experiment done when we were certain that Hood Eugen is crazy.

“However, Daly told me that it’s quite risky. Are you confident? I can ask for assistance from the Backlund diocese. It shouldn’t be a problem to delay it for a few days.”

Klein’s main motivation to become a Beyonder was to study mysticism and find a way home. As it was a chance for practical exercise and he was confident enough, he was naturally unwilling to give it up.

“Captain, I’ve mastered knowledge on the subject. I’m confident about this.

“Of course, I’ll require certain ingredients, such as the Amantha extract, Eye of the Spirit medicine, and Serenity Agent.”

“Serenity Agent...” Dunn ruminated over the name and confirmed Klein’s professionalism.

He remembered Daly mention that it was a liquid medicine that was rarely used yet was very efficient in mediumship.

Dunn Smith pondered for nearly twenty seconds and leaned back into his chair. He said, “Go ahead and fill out a request form. Then, collect what you need from behind Chanis Gate. Eh... I’m not sure if there are any finished goods. If there aren’t any, pick up the ingredients you need and concoct the medicine accordingly.”

“Alright,” Klein replied happily.

He didn’t get up but sat firmly in his chair.

Dunn massaged his temples. He thought carefully and said, “It happens to be my turn to monitor the asylum this evening... We can’t visit Hood Eugen directly. No one knows if there are members of the Psychology Alchemists disguised as doctors, nurses, janitors, or patients in the asylum. No one knows if the Psychology Alchemists are monitoring Hood Organ either. Any action we take must be secret. We can’t expose that Daxter Guderian has become our informant.”

“...We’ll go at dawn by sneaking in secretly.”

“Yes, I’ll keep guard while you perform the ritual to prevent any accidents from happening.”

That’d be best! If Hood Eugen is just pretending to be crazy, while I use a mediumship ritual on him, It would be like I barged into the zoo and danced before a tiger... Klein relaxed and said sincerely, “Yes, Captain!”

He stood up and walked towards the door.

Just then, the corner of his eyes noticed the title of the magazine article the Captain was reading: “Donningsman Tree Sap in the Southern Continent’s rainforests has had a significant effect on boosting hair growth.”

... Klein retracted his gaze, opened the door, and exited the Captain’s office.

Suddenly, there was a playful thought that flashed through his mind.

*Actually, a Beyonder doesn’t need to go through such trouble. If Old Neil was still around, he could design a ritualistic magic for hair regrowth. Then, he would pray for the Goddess’s assistance. Whether one would be covered with hair and become a curly haired baboon, that’s another story... What would the Goddess’s response be? If it were me, I would definitely curse: Motherf*cker...*

That thought suddenly tainted Klein’s happiness with sadness, but there was also a hint of hilarity in the sadness.

He entered the clerk’s office and sat before the Akerson Model 1346 typewriter and finished typing his application.

After Dunn Smith stamped and signed the application, he took it down to the basement and walked along the tunnel that was lit up with gas lamps, towards Chanis Gate.

Only at that moment did Klein realize something.

It would be the first time that he was going beyond the mysterious gate!

"I wonder what it looks like..." He quickened his pace with anticipation and came before the twin doors of the black gate.

He first passed his request to Seeka Tron, who was on duty that day for registration purposes. Then, Klein took back the document that now had her signature as well. He knocked on Chanis Gate and sensed how empty and distant the echo was.

He didn't hear any footsteps but within half a minute, the gate with seven Dark Sacred Emblems opened with a creak.

Chanis Gate opened up to allow a single person's passage before coming to a stop. Klein then walked in with the help of the gas lamps on both sides of the corridor.

Behind the gate, there was an elderly man with obvious wrinkles and thinning hair. He was wearing a classic black robe and holding a barn lantern.

The dim candlelight shone through the glass, illuminating the elderly man's expressionless face which was a mixture of light and darkness. His light blue eyes were like ice that had been frozen for a thousand years.

"Document," he said with his husky voice.

Klein had seen the elderly man before because at dusk every day, he would come out from behind Chanis Gate with his partners. They would pass by the duty room and take the hallway leading to Saint Selena Cathedral.

They were Nighthawks who had aged and volunteered to keep guard inside.

According to Klein's understanding, there were five of them who were keeping watch.

"This is my application." He passed the document in his hands to the elderly man before him.

The guard with light blue eyes raised the barn lantern and looked through the request carefully. After he made sure that there were no mistakes, he moved aside and let Klein pass.

Klein passed through Chanis Gate slowly. He had yet to take a good look around when he felt an indescribably chill.

It wasn't the cold of winter, but a chill that would make a human's spirituality shiver.

Klein lifted his gaze and looked afar. He saw candlesticks appearing on the wall in succession, and there were silver candles with carvings on them. The flames gave out a blue luster, without any flickering.

Creak!

The guard closed Chanis Gate, and the surroundings became extremely quiet.

There was a broad walkway before Klein, a walkway paved with ancient stone slabs.

On both sides of the walkway were stone doors labeled

"Ingredients," "Medicine," "Information," and so on.

At the end of the walkway, there was a flight of stairs that connected to the lower floors. It extended into the dark as though it was connected to the abyss.

It should be connected to different sealed locations that have Sealed Artifacts. I heard that there are a few floors... I wonder which floor contains Saint Selena's ashes? Klein adapted to the brightness

behind the gate and suddenly felt that there was something shapeless scraping against his skin. They were in strips, and every one of them chilled him to the bones.

He shivered, and he couldn't help but activate his Spirit Vision.

Then, he looked at the entire area behind Chanis Gate. It was filled with fine black lines. They were swaying lightly, occasionally clustered together, occasionally extended. They were tightly knitted without any gaps.

This... This is the sealing power behind Chanis Gate? Klein nodded indiscernibly. He reined in his thoughts and followed the guard. They went through a heavy stone door labeled "Medicine Room."

Very soon, he found the Amantha extract, the Eye of the Spirit medicine, and the Serenity Agent by following the alphabet labels.

He had seen the first two before, but it was his first time picking up the latter one. He saw that a blue fluid rippled in the translucent glass bottle. For some reason, looking at the fluid made him feel as though he had entered a mother's embrace.

On the bottle, there was a label. It showed the manufacturing date and the expiration date, which was still some time away.

Luckily, it can still be used... Klein took the three tiny bottles of medicine and walked back to Chanis Gate with the guard keeping him company. He shook off the feeling of coldness that reached the deepest corner of his soul and the creepy experience of being swept by the black lines.

When Chanis Gate closed, he couldn't help but look back. He mumbled to himself, "Staying in there for a long time would affect both the body and soul, right?

"It's no wonder the guards have to volunteer..."

...

Around dawn, Klein used a special technique to lock his bedroom. He pushed open his oriel window and jumped down.

The two-story height posed no danger to the present him. He landed steadily without faltering at all.

The Nighthawks' carriage was already parked opposite, waiting for him.

Without any exchange, Klein quickly arrived at Tingen Asylum in the North Borough. Following the Captain's instructions, he took a detour to one of the corners without a street lamp where he saw the waiting Dunn Smith.

"Let's go in." Dunn nodded faintly. "I've made sure that there's no one around."

"Alright." Klein quickly got closer.

As a Clown, entering an asylum... it keeps reminding me of a famous saying: "It's like returning home [1]*"* He mused to himself.

He followed Dunn closely. With the aid of the wall's bumpy surface, they somersaulted into the asylum quickly and agilely with outstanding balance.

Dunn turned around and looked. He nodded slightly to give his approval.

The two of them crouched and silently moved through the hospital's small park and activity square. They then entered the three-story building in the asylum and arrived at the top floor where Hood Eugen's room was.

As Hood Eugen had the possibility of becoming violent now that he had gone insane, he had been assigned to a single room. Luckily, the monitoring Nighthawks hadn't wasted their efforts during the surveillance and had made a copy of the room key long ago.

Kacha!

The lock clicked lightly, and Dunn entered first. Klein projected his gaze past his figure and saw the person sitting on the bed.

Hood Eugen's face was long and skinny. His eye sockets were deeply concave and his blond hair was disheveled.

He was looking at the metal barred window with his grayishblue eyes. He was looking at the crimson moon outside.

Klein closed the door to the room and chuckled as he casually asked, "Why aren't you sleeping?"

Dunn was taken aback and suddenly remembered that Klein was now a Sequence 8 Clown. Hence, he remained silent and backed off to a corner of the room.

Hood Eugen turned his head and looked at Klein. He chuckled foolishly and replied, "I'm waiting for my cake."

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1. This is a meme of a recalcitrant offender who often gets send to prison and once said in an interview that going to prison is like returning home.

Waiting for cake? That really wasn't an answer that I was expecting... Of course, if I was able to anticipate the answer of a mental patient, wouldn't that mean that I was almost there myself... The thought flashed through Klein's mind. He maintained his relaxed smile as if he was chatting with a friend.

"Who's going to send you a cake?"

Hood Eugen's expression fell instantly, his face long and depressed.

"No, there's no cake... There's no cake!

"You stole my cake!"

His voice suddenly became shrill as he glared angrily at Klein.

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he let out a shout and opened his mouth, revealing two rows of white teeth.

Following which, he leaped from his mattress while salivating. He closed in on Klein with one step and extended his hands, attempting to grab onto Klein's shoulders. He wanted to drag Klein towards him and bite him.

Despite the sudden attack, Klein reacted quickly despite appearing a little flustered. He instantly bent his knee and squatted. At the same time, he tilted his body to the side and raised his left arm.

Oof!

His shoulder slammed into Hood Eugen's abdomen, causing Hood's eyes to turn white and drool to drip from his mouth.

But Hood Eugen didn't stop moving. He allowed the momentum to carry him down as he opened his arms in an attempt to pull Klein into a bear hug.

Klein tilted his body to the side and rolled over, his movements were smooth as though he had practiced them hundreds of times.

He pushed against the ground with his right hand and stood up with a somersault. He decided to go on the offensive and charged forward to restrain his opponent.

But at that moment, Hood Eugen only stood there blankly, his eyes losing focus, becoming vacant and lost.

Klein froze for a moment. He turned his head towards the corner of the room, only to see Dunn Smith, wearing a black trench coat and matching hat, with his hands clasped tightly together and looking down.

The Captain has dragged Hood Eugen into a dream... Upon realizing this, he stopped his subsequent attack and took the opportunity to take out the silver ritual dagger that couldn't harm anyone. He used it to create a wall of spirituality which sealed the ward.

Klein then took out three candles infused with mint and placed them on the window in a triangular formation. One candle signified the Evernight Goddess, another the Mother of the Concealment, and the last represented himself.

Soon after, he set up a simple altar and used his spirituality to ignite the candles.

Just as he was about to warn the Captain, Dunn raised his head and smiled.

"Hood Eugen's dreams are a sea of chaos. There's no way to guide

it."

Just as he finished his sentence, a luster returned to Hood Eugen's eyes. It was no longer vacant.

Then, the insane Psychiatrist moved his waist, letting out a comfortable yawn.

Klein was momentarily at a loss, so he remained quiet. He picked up a metal bottle containing the Amantha extract.

He dripped the transparent liquid extracted from the night vanilla, Slumber flower, and chamomile into the flames of the candle representing himself, allowing the serene aroma to spread around the room.

Hood Eugen's nervousness, anger, and relief completely vanished. He languidly sat down again on the edge of his bed and looked out at the crimson moon outside the window in a daze. His eyes once again lost their focus as peace was restored.

Klein also felt the peace that came with the night. He set the Amantha extract down and sat beside Hood Eugen. He wanted to find something to break down Hood's last line of defense.

Only with the removal of the last line of defense could he use the Eye of the Spirit medication to make Hood Eugen's soul slip into a turbid state.

After all, I'm not a professional Spirit Medium... He had already thought of an idea before coming. He fished out a set of tarot cards from his pocket.

This set of cards only had the twenty-two Major Arcana, so it was easy to carry around. It was a "weapon" that Klein had successfully applied for.

Each of the cards was lined with metal threads made from pure silver, each of them was able to kill undead beings. Their patterns were complicated and gorgeous, making Klein feel like they were a collector's item and not used against enemies.

Klein cut the deck with one hand and smiled at Hood Eugen.

"Let's play some card games."

"Cards?" Hood Eugen retracted his gaze from outside the window as he repeated the term in a daze.

Klein didn't answer, placing the deck of tarot cards into Hood's palm with a sincerity that could not be rejected.

Hood Eugen mimicked Klein's actions, trying his hardest to cut the deck with one hand to some success.

The attention of the mental patient was slowly drawn to the hard yet flexible, beautifully textured cards in his hand. He flipped over the first card:

It was the picture of a man in tattered clothes with his hands tied. He was hanging by his leg with a faint halo at his head.

The Hanged Man... Klein nodded in thought. He took the opportunity to grab the Eye of the Spirit medicine, dripping the amber liquid onto the candle flame—still the one representing himself.

An alcoholic fragrance spread forth, inducing an intoxicated feeling to anyone who took a whiff of it.

Hood Eugen spaced out bit by bit, his vision losing its focus. The deck of tarot cards in his hand fell onto the bed.

But he remained sitting upright, without slumping over.

Klein used Cogitation to fight back against the medicine's dreamy effects of turning light-headed and ethereal. He took out another metal bottle from his pocket and twisted the cap open before pouring the blue liquid into his mouth.

Serenity Agent!

The ice-cold liquid flowed through his throat, down his gullet, and into his stomach. Klein instantly felt unusually awake, without any sense of drowsiness.

He slowly exhaled, then familiarly took out the other essential oil extracts and herb powders, dripping them onto the two candles signifying the Evernight Goddess.

In the faint fog, he took two steps back and solemnly murmured in Hermes, “I pray for the power of the dark night.

“I pray for the power of the mystery.

“I pray for the Goddess’s loving grace.

“I pray that you would allow me to communicate with the spirituality of the Beyonder beside me, Hood Eugen.”

...

The incantations reverberated around the room, and Klein saw the flames of the candle, now dyed black, spread outward.

He didn’t avoid them, nor did he guard against them. He allowed the dark “night” to envelop him.

In this unusually lucid state, he felt his spirit leave the protection of his body and enter a space akin to deep space. All around him was boundless, silent darkness. The sky above him was filled with countless indescribable, transparent figures. There were also streaks of different colors, lustrous splendors that harbored infinite knowledge.

The spiritual world... Klein was no longer a stranger to this.

Just as he had this thought, a foggy world appeared before him.

It was a world enveloped by a faint tornado of light.

Klein knew that it represented Hood Eugen’s spirit that represented his Body of Heart and Mind. Thus, he leaned over, digging into the wall that was the tornado.

In an instant, he saw countless specks of light pelting him. He heard the voices of thousands of people discussing something in whispers.

These murmurings were very chaotic and lacked any sense of logic. Some included praises for the elegance of some lady, then it turned into a description of the feeling of relief after using the toilet. Some started as a weep, then turned into frenzied joy...

The insane thoughts latched on and gnawed at Klein’s spirit in a bid to assimilate him. But Klein maintained his lucidity and rationality, quickly flying towards Hood Eugen’s spiritual world.

This is like a pleasant concert compared to the horrifying murmurings and howls I hear when entering the world above the gray fog... Klein smiled secretly and made his way through the tornado. He saw a groggy, translucent Hood Eugen.

This Sequence 7 Psychiatrist maintained the same state as he was in the outside world. He looked over with a dazed expression.

Klein stopped before him and asked softly, “Do you know Lanevus?”

Hood Eugen replied blankly, “Yes.”

The light around them underwent a transformation as if Hood Eugen was revealing his “spiritual sea.”

Quickly, the intertwining light revealed a bespectacled averagelooking man who wore a sarcastic smile. It was the same Lanevus whom Klein had seen in the arrest warrants.

Klein nodded in satisfaction and collected himself. He asked a guided question, “Why did Lanevus look for you?”

“He said...” Hood Eugen’s voice slowly turned soft.

Suddenly, he changed into a more charismatic voice and laughed a little maniacally.

“Hood Eugen, it is the worst of times, and also the best of times. As long as you seize the opportunity, we can become the rulers of this world, we can become true immortals!

“As long as you’re willing to help, I’ll not only tell you the way to master your potion and avoid losing control, I’ll also promise that you’ll receive godhood qualities in the future—immortal godhood qualities!

“You should be able to see the presence behind me. My promise is ‘His’ promise. In some sense, the Psychology Alchemists are connected to ‘Him.’

“Do not doubt. The Psychology Alchemists aren’t strong enough at the moment. It is unable to provide you with enough help unless you’re willing to stay at this level for the rest of your life.” *The method to grasp your potion without losing control... Why does this sound like how I entice others with the “acting method”... Lanevus sure has lofty ambitions. He’s only a Sequence 8, yet he’s already talking about manipulating godhood qualities... Just what hidden presence is backing him... This guy seems to be plotting something, which isn’t solely just to cheat people out of their money... Or could running scams just be his hobby?* Klein had many thoughts as he listened on. When Hood Eugen stopped talking, he quickly pressed on, “What kind of assistance did Lanevus want you to provide?”

Hood Eugen didn’t answer immediately, his spiritual world turned silent.

He then broke out into laughter. He replied erratically, “Help... Help... Help!

“Hahaha, I provided help! I provided help!

“I made...”

His words came to an abrupt halt as his blurry soul contorted. The light and darkness of the surroundings which represented the spiritual sea quickly turned incorporeal, forming a sinister, scary, dark altar.

On top of the altar was a cross. There seemed to be something hanging on the cross, as well as things that appeared indiscernible piled at the bottom.

The light and darkness alternated, and as the hanging item was about to become clearer, the entire spiritual world shook, as if it was experiencing a magnitude ten earthquake.

Holy shit! Klein had a premonition that something dangerous was about to happen. Without thinking, he turned and flew towards the chaotic tornado of thoughts in an attempt to escape.

Countless rays of brilliance drowned Klein as ravings of a million people filled his ears. However, Klein thought nothing of it. His abilities as a Clown told him that his spirit was being engulfed by a black shadow that was rapidly expanding.

The black shadow was a huge cross, and there seemed to be a person hanging upside down on it!

Kacha!

The chaotic tornado of thoughts unleashed its load outwards and turned uniform. Hood Eugen's spiritual world disintegrated bit by bit.

Klein noticed that he had exceeded his fastest flying speed from his previous trial; his soul had become significantly stronger after he briefly mixed with some of the strength from the mysterious space above the gray fog.

Just as the cross's shadow was about to engulf him entirely, he dashed out of the blurry "world" and felt his body.

He familiarly stimulated a descent, and Hood Eugen's long skinny face and messy blond hair instantly appeared in his vision, along with the three candles that were burning at the window ledge.

He had managed to get out of the mediumship state in time!

In that instant, he saw black scales growing one after another on Hood Eugen's face. His vacant pupils turned into slits, becoming extremely cool and ruthless.

Oh shit! He's going to lose control! Klein's pupils constricted, and before he could react, he saw a figure in a knee-length black trench coat and silk top hat take two huge strides before Hood Eugen. He then raised the revolver and pushed it against the man's head.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn Smith fired five bullets consecutively. Hood Eugen's head suddenly blew up like a watermelon falling down from a high height. The red and white rainstorm splattered across each and every corner of the room.

He had taken care of Hood Eugen before he lost control completely!

Klein, who was fifty centimeters away, was covered in blood and dirt. He looked at Dunn Smith in a daze, only having the feeling that the Captain was very handsome at that moment.

As long as you ignore his memory problems, the Captain is very trustworthy... He complimented sincerely from the bottom of his heart.

"Did an accident happen?" Dunn put away his revolver and watched Hood Eugen's mostly headless body slowly fall to the floor.

Just as Klein was about to organize his words, he saw that the body had become a pile of bloody flesh within a few seconds and the asylum uniform that covered it appeared to have its most basic structure damaged.

Hood Eugen's corpse was left with very few complete items. There were dozens of scales twinkling with a black shimmer, and his heart that had turned crystalline and faint blue.

The heart had a magical luster, like a diamond refracting incoming light.

It could calm someone down or make them restless. It could create tension or develop chaos. But other than that, there was nothing notable.

"This item should be controllable." After Dunn holstered his revolver, he took out a black glove and wore it on his right hand. He then squatted down to pick up the crystalline heart.

A controllable item... According to what the Captain previously mentioned, it could be used as the main ingredient for the formula of a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist... But, would it lead to the advanced Beyonder losing control even more easily? Klein took out his handkerchief to wipe the blood from his face and body. He then picked up his specially made tarot cards and cleaned their surfaces.

He looked at the ground and asked curiously, "What kind of items would these black scales be considered as?"

"These are ingredients that are contaminated with Beyonder power. They could be made into items that have long-lasting effects. For example, our demon hunting bullets' ability to injure dead spirits or monsters would decrease drastically as soon as they pass the three months mark, leaving only a tiny portion of demon-hunting characteristics in the remnant materials. If the materials used were something like the black scales, the effective period would be as long as a year or two, and the effects would be even better. Of course, due to their characteristics, the black scales are obviously not suitable to be made into demon hunting bullets," Dunn explained as he took a piece of paper from Klein to wrap the blue heart and black scales.

"It's just like the materials we use as supplementary ingredients for the potions?" Klein asked.

Dunn stood back up and nodded slightly.

"Yes."

Someone who loses control will really become a monster... Klein sighed. He seized the opportunity while the room was still sealed with a wall of spirituality and quickly described his encounter in Eugen's mind.

"When I was communicating with Hood Eugen's spirit, I saw a figure like the True Creator in his mind. But it was different from the mainstream ones. It wasn't the chain-bound Hanged Giant, nor was it the Eye behind the Shadow Curtains. Instead, it was similar to the one you saw in Hanass Vincent's dream."

Hanass Vincent was a member of the Aurora Order. As Melissa's friend, Selena, had peeked at his incantations and completed the magic mirror divination, it led to the Nighthawks' investigation of him.

Dunn Smith saw something close to the True Creator in his dream, but it was a different image than the mainstream image that was widely circulated. In the end, the result was an injury and a strange death.

When Hood Eugen flipped over the tarot card of The Hanged Man, Klein had actually already expected it. But he never thought it would be presented in such a way. Of course, it was only indirect contact. It wouldn't be comparable to the time he had spied on the Eternal Blazing Sun directly. The worst outcome was just mild injury or mild corruption.

As he listened to Klein's description, Dunn's expression became solemn.

He knitted his eyebrows and said with a deep voice, "A huge cross, black nails, a naked man covered in blood hanging upside down?"

"I didn't see it clearly. That's also the reason why I'm not injured. I only noticed a huge cross and figure similar to a man being hung upside down," Klein replied tactfully.

At that moment, all he cared about was "fleeing"...

Seemingly in thought, Dunn nodded and said, "Lanevus's visit to Hood Eugen was related to the True Creator? So the Aurora Order is involved?"

Klein quickly repeated the conversation he'd had during the communication.

"Lanevus tempted Hood Eugen with the 'acting method,' and a so-called immortal godhood. But I don't understand why he said that it was the worst of times, and also the best of times. Perhaps it was just the way he speaks as a Swindler?

"...The help Hood Eugen provided involved a sinister and dark altar... I suspect that Lanevus is plotting something terrifying..." Then, his heart stirred as he spoke.

"Captain, do you remember the letter written to Mr. Z? The letter that the member from the Aurora Order whom I killed carried!

"He mentioned in the letter that he was waiting for an appropriate opportunity, something about the arrival of the end of days, he will offer all the lambs in Tingen to his so-called God. Would this be related to Lanevus's plot?

"Could Lanevus be the Mr. Z from the Aurora Order?"

Dunn Smith thought carefully and said, "I don't think so. Lanevus couldn't be Mr. Z. Otherwise, he wouldn't be setting up a fake steelworks company to scam people while the Aurora Order was up to something. It would introduce too many variables in his main mission. If anything went wrong with the scam, he would draw the attention of the police and us. He would have to run away from Tingen and abandon his plan.

"Of course, if he was just insane, it would be perfectly normal for him to act illogically.

"But judging from the scam he set up, the calmness and cunningness with which he swept away the money doesn't make him look like a real lunatic.

"So, I don't think he's Mr. Z from the Aurora Order. Of course, he might really be involved in the matter as mentioned in the letter. The one offering all the lambs in Tingen to the so-called God."

Upon saying that, Dunn paused, then paced back and forth as he said, "This incident might have quite severe repercussions. We have to reinvestigate Lanevus and get some clues. Hmm, let's clean up the scene and cover up any evidence here. Let everyone know that Hood Eugen died but leave no clue as to who killed him. This should lead to action by the Psychology Alchemists or other Beyonders that are paying attention to the asylum. They might know something.

"The Lanevus scam is either still in the hands of the police department or transferred to the Mandated Punishers. We'll join the investigations by saying that we obtained clues while investigating the Aurora Order. Then, we'll work together with the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind. We'll concentrate the forces in Tingen and investigate everything and anyone associated with Lanevus. We can request assistance from Backlund diocese and the Holy Cathedral if it's necessary!"

After that, Dunn turned his head sideways to look at Klein. He ruminated and said, "Do you have anything that you'd like to add?"

Captain, you basically said it all... Klein shook his head solemnly. "No!"

He hurriedly used ritualistic magic to remove some of the necessary traces with the aid of the simple altar that he had yet to clear in order to ensure that no one would be able to tell that they were the ones who killed Hood Eugen.

Then, he put away his ingredients, blew out the candles, removed the wall of spirituality, and left the ward in silence with Dunn Smith. They left the asylum by climbing over its walls.

"Go back and rest." Dunn stood at a corner without a street lamp.

He pressed his black silk hat and said, "there are many things that can only be done tomorrow."

"Alright." Klein wasn't a Sleepless who only slept two to three hours a day. He immediately bade farewell to the Captain and took the Nighthawks' dedicated carriage that was waiting nearby and returned to Daffodil Street.

Before he entered the carriage, he turned back to take a glance. He saw the Captain still standing in the dark which even the moonlight couldn't touch. He appeared to be thinking in silence.

The streets were quiet and void of people before dawn. The carriage tore through the streets, sometimes going straight, sometimes taking turns.

Klein was pondering about Lanevus when suddenly, he felt as if he was in a trance.

He saw that the color before his eyes become saturated. The reds became redder and the blacks became blacker, just like an impressionist's oil painting.

The surroundings slowed down, and the carriage seemed to enter a strange world.

Klein grabbed his Flaring Sun Charm and drew his revolver.

Just then, a huge, white, bony palm extended through the carriage window and threw in a neatly folded letter.

Then, the palm pulled back and vanished. The oil painting-like scene suddenly returned to normal while the carriage was still driving along the street steadily.

...It's a really well-hidden method... Klein looked at the letter, by the side of his foot, as the corner of his lips twitched.

The actions of the messenger shocked Klein for a full five seconds before he recovered. He bent over and picked up the letter.

"Even if Mr. Azik is unable to use a good portion of his abilities as a Beyonder, because of his memory loss, being able to send out such a messenger should make him powerful enough to deal with a Sequence 7 or 6 Beyonder." His heart reflected his shocked and envious expression. He didn't unfold the letter immediately. Instead, he placed the letter into his pocket, together with the Slumber Charms.

The carriage continued forward. When Klein exited the carriage at Daffodil Street, he instinctively looked at the driver, Cesare, only to see his relaxed smile, as if he hadn't noticed anything unusual that had happened.

Klein nodded and returned home after observing Cesare with his Spirit Vision.

He looked at the balcony and pipes on the second floor and pondered for a few seconds. He decided to maintain his gentlemanly behavior and not attempt to scale the pipe back into his room. As for his stained clothes, he would take them to the Blackthorn Security Company tomorrow and get a professional to wash them through the police department. That would prevent his clothes from shocking his maid Bella and his sister Melissa.

Klein had removed the reverse lock on the front door before he leaped out the window from the second floor. Now, he took advantage of the fact that it was late at night and quietly opened the door to his house, deftly making his way in.

After closing and locking the main door, he heaved a sigh of relief. He went up to the second floor with hushed footsteps.

Stopping before his locked bedroom, Klein took out a tarot card calmly. He inserted it into the slit of the door and lightly pulled, easily breaking the specialized lock he designed himself.

He then entered the room, locked the door, and removed his clothes, before he fully relaxed.

It sure feels like being a thief... Klein laughed as he shook his head. He calmly took out his revolver and placed it under the pillow.

After he was finished with all of that, he lit up the gas lamp and sat in front of his desk. He took out the letter and began reading seriously.

"I'm sorry for replying only now. I've been busy searching for traces of my past. I've also been meeting up with former teachers and students and those drag on late into the night.

"I finally understand the encounters that I've had over the past two days after reading your letter. The police searched every room in the hotel that I'm staying at. There was a person who secretly snooped around in the hotel at night. Yes, I'm talking about a person with Beyonder powers.

"...So Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos, who's a frequent character in novels and newspapers, has infiltrated Backlund and has gone on quite a killing spree. I remember that he's not only wanted by the Loen Kingdom, he's also on the bounty list of the Feysac Empire, the Intis Republic, the Feynapotter Kingdom..."

So, how much is the bounty? Klein subconsciously wondered.

He didn't get an answer because Azik had switched to mentioning something else.

"I find the abilities of a Shepherd that you described quite familiar, it's as if I've seen it somewhere, but I cannot remember where. It must be an encounter from one of my past lives. Not being able to recall it makes me very frustrated."

Eh, Mr. Azik is a little interested in the Shepherd. I can use this to get him to help me. Yes, this sure is coincidental... No, this is not a coincidence, but inevitable!

It can be inferred that Mr. Azik has lived for over a thousand years and is most likely a High-Sequence Beyonder. Then, he would most likely have encountered the powers of many different Beyonders in his earlier lives. He would also have deeper impressions of those that were more unique... In other words, it isn't only the Shepherd that would give him feelings of familiarity, but jobs such as the Unshadowed, Demon Hunter, or Guardian that would do so as well...

It's highly likely that Mr. Azik would find any mystical item that corresponds to a particular Sequence's abilities familiar and have his interest piqued. That's something that can be imagined...

Klein was doubtful at first before being enlightened. He was a lot more certain as a result.

He shifted his gaze and continued to read the letter.

"I've long recalled some parts of the sacrificial ritual you asked about, probably because I have a deeper impression of them. Perhaps I was a priest in my one of my more recent lifetimes.

"I have to remind you and warn you, that you have to be very cautious when using sacrificial rituals. You cannot entrust your safety to evil gods or hidden, mysterious existences. They do not have consciences like we do.

"Also, you have to possess a strong sense of right and wrong, for the evil gods and devils often create seemingly harmless identities for themselves. My opinion is that you cannot sacrifice something whose presence you are not fully aware of; otherwise, your soul could end up being the sacrificial item."

In simple terms, evil gods and devils will take on another form, disguising themselves as someone trustworthy... Just like on the Internet, an account that claims to be a seemingly adorable chick might be controlled by a huge bloke... He had to be cautious even if they were to meet offline after confirming the person's looks, as the person might just be cross-dresser... Klein didn't disregard Azik's warning just because he was conducting the sacrificial ritual for himself. He nodded in approval.

After Azik emphasized a few things he had to look out for, he quickly explained the sacrificial ritual he knew of.

"First, set up the ritual. Choose the symbols based on which deity or unorthodox mysterious existence you are going to offer a sacrifice to. Use the corresponding herbs and minerals of 'His' or 'Her' domain. Of course, you can also make them into holy oils, ointments, scents, and other items in advance."

Symbols? Klein froze for a moment. He realized that he—The Fool that didn't belong to this era—didn't know what his corresponding symbol was...

He thought for a moment, quickly recalling the complex symbol on the back of his chair at the ancient bronze table. It was made up of a Pupil-less Eye which represented concealment, and the partial Contorted Lines which represented change.

That should be my symbol, or more accurately, that is what symbolizes me in the world above the gray fog. My domain is much simpler then—concealment, change, good luck... But I cannot be too sure of that, so I'll have to try it out... Even if the symbol is wrong, as long as I get my honorary name right, the target of the sacrifice wouldn't point towards some other entity. The worst thing that could happen is that the ritual would fail. Of that, I'm certain... Klein thought as he rubbed the surface of the paper as he formulated a plan in his heart.

His eyes focused on the letter once again, reading the rest of the letter.

"Second, you need to be clear if the sacrifice needs to happen at a specific time. Then, follow the processes of a normal ritual, until you finish reciting the honorific names and incantations of the ritual.

"You must remember to use either Jotun, Dragonese, Elvish, or ancient Hermes. You must use the natural powers in these languages to establish a direct connection with the corresponding entity. You can design the exact incantations to use, but it must include these critical terms: 'pray,' 'notice,' 'offer,' 'kingdom,' 'gates,' and 'open.'

“Finally, you must use materials that have a certain spirituality quality to create a connection with the natural powers of the incantation. This will allow you to construct a tunnel that connects to the gates of the kingdom where the corresponding entity resides. If the entity is interested, then your sacrifice is complete.

“This step isn’t absolutely necessary. If you can make the corresponding entity very interested in your sacrifice, then ‘He’ will open the gates to ‘His’ kingdom for you after you finish reciting the incantations, establishing a stable tunnel on ‘His’ own accord. Of course, this would often imply danger as the orthodox result as relatively friendly hidden gods rarely do this. Only evil gods or devils would reply to you directly in order to achieve their goals.”

Materials that have spirituality are not cheap... I wonder if merely reciting the incantations would allow me to open a sacrificial tunnel similar to the Door of Summoning? I wonder if I could make use of the abilities of the world above the gray fog... Yes, I’ll try that first and only get the materials with spirituality from the underground market if I fail. Do I need Beyonder ingredients? It should be fine if it possesses a certain amount of spirituality, right? Klein thought about the 300 pounds lying around in his anonymous account. He also thought about the 10 plus pounds of savings that he had saved up.

Beyonder materials were not completely identical to materials that possessed spirituality. For example, the heart that Hood Eugen left behind was a Beyonder ingredient while the black scales were a material possessing certain amounts of spirituality.

After he finished reading Mr. Azik’s letter, Klein rubbed his fingers together and ignited a flame of spirituality. He burned the paper to ash and threw it into the rubbish bin.

It was already deep into the night and Klein was in no hurry to try the ritual. He intended to first make a plan and go through everything that he needed to take note of before putting it into practice.

He had a vague understanding of his shortcomings long ago. He was cautious and rational when it came to things he made plans for, but once the events deviated from his original plans, he would easily consider only the good and disregard the bad when he was forced to be on his toes.

A simpler description would be that a rash action of his would easily cause him to court death... Klein extended his palm to cover his face.

The next day, Dunn Smith, who had communicated with the Mandated Punishers and Machinery Hivemind, started to assign missions. Klein also received his assignment. He was tasked to investigate a number of people who had connections to Lanevus. But because of his suggestion and the policy of the Nighthawks, he didn’t have to be responsible for the people he had met previously.

Of course, Klein continued with his combat lessons in the afternoon. Nor did Dunn assign him the role of lead investigator.

...

Backlund, Hillston Backlund. In a building with a horse stable and garden.

Qilangos, who had a unique wide chin and dark green eyes, looked at the unconscious man before him. He took off the man’s clothes and wore them.

He then leisurely walked in front of the dressing mirror and saw the black glove on his left hand twitch. He saw many Contorted Lines appearing on its back.

A few seconds later, Qilangos saw a thin veil of light envelop his figure. His muscles, skin, and bones began undergoing a strange transformation.

Sometime later, he transformed into the unconscious man, completely identical in height, appearance, and demeanor!

Sharp nose, thin eyebrows, slightly droopy cheeks, faint blue eyes... Qilangos examined himself in the mirror. He was certain that he looked no different from the unconscious man.

After he rehearsed a few of the man's gestures, he bent down to drag the man off the ground and shoved him into a wardrobe.

Then, he extended his right hand. With an audible snap, he broke the man's neck.

Qilangos took out his handkerchief and wiped his hands before closing the wardrobe door.

He slowly walked back to the mirror, wore a black doublebreasted frock coat, tied a bowtie, and raised a bottle of ambercolored cologne. He dripped a few drops on his wrist, then dabbed them over himself.

Qilangos tidied his hair in front of the mirror, then walked out of the room. He clasped his hands and told his butler who was waiting outside, "Don't let anyone enter my room; I'm keeping something very important in there."

"Yes, Baron!" The balding butler pressed his hand against his chest and bowed. "Your carriage and personal servant is waiting downstairs. Duke Negan's invitation card is there as well."

Maintaining the baron's mannerisms, Qilangos nodded indiscernibly. He walked towards the stairs in an arrogant manner under the company of his butler.

Heh, a baron who is riddled in debt, to the point of not wanting to hire a normal security guard, has actually maintained his hiring of a butler, a valet, two footmen, two parlor-maids, four chambermaids, two laundresses, one carriage driver, one coachman, one gardener, one chef, and one sous chef. To these foolish nobles, dignity really is everything... I even had to waste some of my time to learn the strange pronunciations and socalled "noble slang"... Qilangos thought to himself in disdain.

...

Backlund, Cherwood Borough. In a particular cramped apartment.

Xio Derecha sat cross-legged on a bed and looked at Fors Wall who was reading a novel with the light from the window.

"This is so disappointing. Qilangos didn't leave any clues behind. We still haven't figured out what he's trying to do in Backlund."

They had acted according to their initial plan and lodged a police report. Then, they secretly sent a letter to the local police station and described the strange situation at the crime scene in detail. They also mentioned that the suspect could be Qilangos.

The police station responded as they had predicted. The policemen were very careful, and they transferred the case directly to the Mandated Punishers.

After a day's time, the news that Vice Admiral Hurricane had sneaked into Backlund was widely spread among all "enforcement teams." Xio and Fors also left the place they originally rented and hid to investigate in secret.

They didn't want to be brought back to the police station to help with the official investigation. The Mandated Punishers, Nighthawks, and Machinery Hivemind were all hostile towards non-official Beyonders. The Churches viewed them as potential criminals.

Hence, not only were Xio and Fors avoiding the possibility of Qilangos's pursuit, but they were also hiding from the "enforcement" authorities.

"If we could discover his purpose so easily, Qilangos would've been buried in a cemetery long ago, and the tombstone would be covered in weeds," Fors replied casually. "We need to wait patiently. As long as the authorities continue to take this much interest in him, Qilangos will definitely make a

mistake. I've got to say, I'm quite envious of a mystical item that can allow one to change appearances."

Xio hugged her knees and looked out the window.

"I'm just worried that Qilangos will take action soon and then flee from Backlund before anyone can respond.

"If that happens, I don't know when I'll be able to advance to Sequence 8, let alone Sequence 6 or Sequence 5..."

She paused and muttered as her mind spaced out, "I don't know when I'll be able to take back the things that belonged to our family... It's been almost a year since I last saw my younger brother..."

Fors gave her a comforting smile.

"When you fulfill your wishes, please allow me to write your experiences into a story. It would definitely be an interesting and exciting one."

"Hmm, I actually find Miss Audrey very generous. Even if Qilangos escapes, I think she'll still reward us handsomely. We've been busying ourselves for so long after all, and we've even caused Qilangos to appear."

"I hope so... Sigh, why can't I have any fortuitous encounters?" Xio grabbed her shoulder-length blonde hair.

Fors frowned and said, "In the Beyonder world, fortuitous encounters are usually accompanied with danger. I have yet to figure out what the ravings I hear during the full moon mean, or if they will result in negative changes. Heh heh, fortuitous encounters without dangers may exist, but they are very, very rare. It's difficult for your wish to be fulfilled, unless... unless we receive the favors from an orthodox deity or the attention of some friendly hidden existence. However, it would be hard for us to tell if it was really an evil god or devil in disguise."

Xio sat straight and drew a crimson moon on her chest.

"May the Goddess watch over me!"

...

Duke Negan was in his mansion located in Backlund, Empress Borough, where he was hosting a grand ball.

There were two parts of the mansion. One was the dancing hall located on the ground floor, which was covered with glamorous stone slabs carved with complicated patterns. There was the duke's excellent ensemble playing music in a corner. Up the stairs, there was a winding corridor that circled the hall located on the second floor. The guests were holding their glasses, leaning against the railing, overlooking the people dancing on the ground floor as though they were enjoying a fencing match from the stands. Occasionally, a gentleman would walk before a lady or his wife to invite them to dance. If the invitation was accepted, both of them would walk down the stairs hand in hand and enter the hall.

On the far side of the corridor, there were doors after doors. They were rooms that had been allocated to the guests as their resting quarters.

But behind a French door was a corridor, and on both sides of the corridor were various gypsum statues. They were all the ancestors of the Negan family.

At the end of the corridor was another hall which could see the ball. Long tables were covered with a variety of delicious food and fine wine, and another ensemble belonging to the duke was playing relaxing melodies for the guests.

In the hall, the guests were gathering in groups. Some were seated and some stood around, chatting about all kinds of matters. Those who wished to get away from the frivolities for a while would go to the attached balconies to overlook the garden and enjoy the crimson moon in the sky.

After participating in the opening dance, Audrey Hall stood on the second floor above the dancing hall and stared at the candles on the huge crystal chandeliers hanging from the rooftop in a daze. However, she noticed that many young men were appearing to pump themselves up to come over and invite her for a dance. So, she wisely left the place and went to the corridor that connected to the dining hall.

How boring, but my attendance is necessary... Sigh, can't they just let me observe in silence? I have to say, some people have rich facial expressions when they dance. They remind me of animals seeking mates... Audrey lowered her head, looked at the tips of her feet, and walked in a straight line out of boredom.

Just then, the corner of her eyes caught an approaching figure. She slowed down, stood straight, and instantly became the elegant yet quiet Miss Hall.

"Good day, Baron Gramir," Audrey greeted with a flawless smile and etiquette.

Baron Gramir had thin eyebrows and faint blue eyes. He smiled and bowed.

"Nice to meet you again, Miss Hall. You are the brightest and most dazzling jewel at this ball."

After exchanging a few words, Baron Gramir headed for the dancing hall while Audrey continued approaching the dining hall.

After a few steps, she suddenly frowned. There was puzzlement in her green eyes.

Baron Gramir isn't the same as before...

In the past, when he sees a pretty lady or madam of a higher rank than he is, and one that's relatively prettier, he would look to the side without looking at them directly. Then, he would steal glances constantly... But today, he appears very confident...

Also, his cologne smells off. In the numerous parties in the past, his body would emit the final note of the Amber cologne fragrance, musky yet faint, not ostentatious yet elegant. In other words, he would spray the cologne a few hours earlier to let the front and middle notes disperse before the gathering. But just now, his cologne was Amber in middle note, rich and refined...

Audrey slowed down her footsteps. As a Spectator who had completely digested her potion, her sensitivity towards details wasn't anything other Beyonders could compare to.

Suddenly, she thought of a possibility. Her green crystal-clear eyes froze.

It couldn't be Qilangos in a disguise, right?

The Creeping Hunger has the power to change a person's appearance!

...

The more Audrey thought about it, the more possible it seemed. She felt uptight as she turned nervous and panicky.

If he really was Vice Admiral Hurricane, what is he trying to do? It's a pity that I can't bring Susie to the ball. Otherwise, I could ask her to observe Baron Gramir... No way, I have to warn Father! Amidst her frantic thoughts, Audrey quickened her pace and entered the dining hall. She found Earl Hall who was talking to the Chief Cabinet Secretary and others.

She flashed a flawless smile and walked over. She held Earl Hall by his arm and told the others, "Gentlemen, do you mind if I borrow Earl Hall for a few minutes?"

"Beautiful lady, it's your right," The few gentlemen said in a friendly response.

Audrey held Earl Hall by his arm and moved to the nearest balcony. They found a quiet, uninhabited corner, and she said to her middle-aged father who was getting plump, “Father, I have something to tell you.”

Earl Hall was smiling fondly at his daughter, but he got serious when he saw her serious facial expression, “What’s the matter?”

“I ran into Baron Gramir earlier, but there are things about him that are different from the past. For instance, his cologne was in the middle note of the Amber fragrance. It used to be the end note. And...” Audrey continued with the things that she found different. It could be explained as being sensitive and meticulous.

After she described what she had noticed, she weighed her words and added, “I heard from Viscount Glaint that Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos has the ability to take on other people’s appearance. Hasn’t he been in Backlund recently?”

Earl Hall listened to her carefully, and his face grew abnormally grave.

But he soon flashed a smile and comforted his anxious daughter.

“I’ll take care of this. Go look for your mother and stay with her.

She’s at the lounge in this hall.”

“Okay.” Audrey nodded obediently.

On the way back to the lounge, she turned around and looked at her father. She saw that Earl Hall was talking to another noble softly, and he wore a rather solemn look.

Audrey couldn’t help but feel anxious. She felt that she needed to do something to make sure that her father, mother, and brother didn’t get hurt.

She surveyed the area and changed the direction in which she was heading in. She left the dining hall and found Duke Negan’s small prayer room.

She pushed the door closed and locked it behind her. She looked at the symbol of the Lord of Storms before her and subconsciously found a remote and dark corner.

Audrey sat down with her body leaning forward. She clasped her hands together into a praying position and supported her forehead.

Then, she recited softly in Hermes, “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, you are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; you are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.”

CHAPTER 189: PRAYERS AND REPLIES

Tingen City, Daffodil Street.

Klein was discussing the latest play with Benson and Melissa and was inviting them to watch it at the theater next weekend.

"I think the newspapers have said enough about it. 'The Return of the Count' is definitely a play that's worth watching. It's already been performed more than ten times in Backlund, and it sold out each time. I think that we shouldn't miss this opportunity." Klein, who had lacked sources of entertainment, was unwilling to give up. After all, he had been an ardent follower of television shows back on Earth.

Of course, if it wasn't for the maintenance of my image, I'd rather go to a bar and play billiards... Yes, renting a venue for tennis isn't a bad choice. That can be considered as it's a leisure sport for the middle class. With my current fitness, as long as I don't encounter other Beyonders, I should be able to handle most opponents easily... Forget it, it can only be a passing thought for now. I still have to reinvestigate the figures associated with Lanevus in the morning, go for combat training in the afternoon, and search for the house with the red chimney in the evening before returning home...

I sure am a busy man... Klein tried to remain optimistic.

Noticing that Benson was inclined towards his suggestion while Melissa was still a little hesitant, Klein smiled as he added, "I heard that the most popular supporting cast in 'The Return of the Count' is a genius mechanic."

"Alright, we do have to see a play at a large theater once in our lives." Melissa pouted and nodded her head grudgingly, but there was now a sparkle in her eyes.

Klein was about to respond when he heard a buzzing in his ears. He became dizzy for a few seconds.

Someone is praying to me... He supported his back with his right hand and chuckled.

"Then I shall wait patiently for the tickets to go on sale."

"Alright, I'll be returning to my bedroom to write up a report."

"We also have to plunge into the sea of knowledge and hope that we don't drown." Benson let out a self-deprecating laugh as he returned to the dining room with Melissa.

Klein went to the second floor and locked the door to his room. He sealed the room with a wall of spirituality, then he took four steps counterclockwise as he recited the incantations, returning to the world above the gray fog.

His figure suddenly appeared at the seat of honor in the magnificent palace fit for a giant. A pulsing crimson star reflected in his eyes.

Klein lifted his right hand and extended his spirituality, establishing a connection with the star representing Justice.

With a boom, he saw a blurred, distorted image. He saw Miss Justice in a long beige regal dress sitting on a chair in a dark corner. Her head was bowed, her hands clasped.

At the same time, her still nascent and nervous voice stacked in an illusory manner, reverberating around the space, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era,

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I pray for your attention.

"I pray for you to listen."

...

“I’m at a ball held by Duke Negan and encountered someone who’s suspected to be Qilangos.

“He is disguising himself as Baron Gramir, and his motives are unclear.

“I noticed today that some of the details regarding Baron Gramir were a little different than usual. This made me recall the appearance-altering Beyonder power that Qilangos’s mystical item has.”

...

Klein listened seriously and carefully interpreted what was happening. Finally, he understood what Miss Justice was describing.

Qilangos has actually used the special powers of Creeping Hunger to infiltrate Duke Negan’s ball!

But Qilangos probably didn’t expect that one of the ladies at the ball is a Spectator, a Spectator who has committed the mannerisms of Baron Gramir to memory! Hence, he doesn’t realize that he’s been exposed!

What does Qilangos want? And what should I do? I’ve tried conducting the sacrificial ritual without spirituality-infused materials over the past two days and realized that I can create something like the Door of Summoning, but I’m unable to open it. I was going to find some time to purchase some materials with spirituality in the underground market to prepare for my second experiment. Miss Justice definitely wouldn’t have spiritualityinfused materials when she’s attending a ball... Klein thought for more than ten seconds before beginning his response to Justice’s prayer.

...

In a small prayer room in Duke Negan’s mansion.

Audrey repeated her prayers a few times before finally stopping. She tidied her clothes and walked quickly to the door.

She knew that she couldn’t be gone for too long because her parents would worry about her and thus misjudge the situation.

It would cause them to react in the wrong way.

Standing behind the door, Audrey took a deep breath, extended her right hand which was covered in a white veiled glove, and released the lock with a wary heart.

After leaving the small prayer room, she followed the path back to the dining hall. She saw the figures holding wine glasses and plates get closer when her vision suddenly turned blurry. She realized that an illusory fog was spreading into the surroundings.

In the middle of the thick wide fog was an ancient chair, and atop the chair was a mysterious presence, a mysterious presence that seemed to overlook everything.

Mr. Fool! Audrey almost shouted in pleasant surprise.

She then heard a deep, familiar voice: “I’m aware.”

The voice reverberated around the space as the fog vanished. Audrey’s vision was still filled with images of the long tables of food and wine, as well as the bustling sights of interacting guests.

The worry and unease in her heart vanished as she subconsciously straightened her back and entered the dining hall with light steps. She walked toward the recreation room in the dining hall.

...

In the magnificent palace above the fog.

Klein started to think about how to convey the message to The Hanged Man after finishing his reply to Miss Justice.

I cannot just repeat the description to him since it undermines my authority... After all, what mysterious existence would personally take on the role of a messenger!? He deliberated for nearly a minute before an idea came to him. He conjured the scene of Miss Justice praying and transformed it into something akin to a movie scene with the faces mosaicked and censored.

He then extended his hand and tapped, launching the scene into the crimson star representing The Hanged Man.

...

Backlund, Cherwood Borough. At the Holy Wind Cathedral.

The Hanged Man, Alger Wilson, was going through the investigation reports in a simple room, trying to find traces of Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos.

Near his right hand was a stack of paper filled with many contorted symbols.

Just as Alger was leaning back in his chair and rubbing his eyes, he saw his field of vision turn blurry. His line of sight was filled with thick, gray fog.

There was an ancient chair which seemed to exist eternally, deep within the endless fog. Atop the chair was a faint human figure.

Mr. Fool... Just as this thought came to Alger, he saw that another hazy figure in a regal dress within the grayish-white fog.

She was in a praying position, repeating, "I'm at a ball held by Duke Negan and encountered someone who's suspected to be Qilangos.

"He is disguising himself as Baron Gramir, and his motives are unclear.

"I noticed today that some of the details regarding Baron Gramir were a little different than usual. This made me recall the appearance-altering Beyonder power that Qilangos's mystical item has."

...

Alger was shocked at first, then let out a look of pleasant surprise. He pressed his palm against his chest and lowered his head, "Praise you, Mr. Fool!"

Everything he saw or heard vanished before he finished his sentence as if nothing had happened.

Staring at the desk strewn with Emperor Roselle's diary pages and his investigation reports, Alger's pupils constricted as he realized how powerful The Fool was once again.

This was the Holy Wind Cathedral—once the headquarters of the Church of Storms. Even though that was history from more than a thousand years ago, many believers still viewed this place as sacred. But Mr. Fool could still descend upon this space without warning and give a reply...

After nearly twenty seconds of silence, Alger gathered his stuff and exited the room.

He was going to look for one of the Cardinals of the Church of Storms, the Archbishop of the Backlund diocese, Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake!

For Alger Wilson, being able to kill Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos personally was the best course of action, but if he was unable to do that, guaranteeing that he was really dead was also acceptable in his book!

...

After forwarding Miss Justice's description to The Hanged Man, Klein left the mysterious world above the gray fog and returned to his bedroom.

While he was in no hurry to dispel the wall of spirituality, he sat before his desk and took out a piece of paper. He picked up a pen and began his letter.

“According to an urgent indication from a source, Qilangos has used the abilities of a Shepherd to take on the appearance of Baron Gramir and has infiltrated Duke Negan’s ball. His motives are unclear as of this moment.”

Klein wasn’t worried that Mr. Azik would be suspicious of him or doubt why someone in Tingen would be so quick to know something that just happened in Backlund, for the telegraph existed in this world.

“I don’t know if you would be interested in this, but I thought that I should let you know.” Klein quickly ended the letter and folded the piece of paper.

He then found the ancient copper whistle, brought it to his mouth, and gave it a hard blow.

The gigantic, terrifying, and illusory skeleton messenger appeared once again, still standing at its original spot, not minding that its head was going through the ceiling.

Klein fought back the urge to use the abilities of the Clown to turn the letter into a flying dagger. He tossed the letter towards the messenger without a fuss.

He then blew on the copper whistle once again to end the summoning. Klein collected himself and went through the events in his head once again.

This was all he could do for the time being!

Although Klein could also make use of the summoning ritual and bring the Flaring Sun Charm directly to Backlund, it was too dangerous for him to do so. First, Qilangos was a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed and had with him the Creeping Hunger. Second, it was too troublesome. He had to first bring the Flaring Sun Charm to the world above the gray fog. Third, his image would be affected. Thus, he wisely gave up on this idea.

To be honest, the problem is not too serious. Duke Negan is the most influential noble outside of the royal family, a key member behind the Conservative Party. There will be many high ranking nobles attending the ball today. I have no doubt that there are Beyonders guarding the area. If not for this consideration, there would have been no need for him to infiltrate the place under a disguise... Since Miss Justice noticed him early, the nobles should be prepared. This incident shouldn’t blow out of control...

I wonder how fast Mr. Azik’s messenger is? If it travels through the spirit world, Mr. Azik could still likely make it in time for the “main course,” but if it’s as slow as Madam Daly’s messenger, then he might only read about the incident in tomorrow’s paper...

Klein nodded indiscernibly and tossed this incident to the back of his head. After all, there was nothing more that he could do.

In Duke Negan's mansion, in the dancing hall.

Disguised as Baron Gramir, Qilangos held a glass of blood-red Aurmir grape wine and casually stood behind the railing on the winding corridor on the second floor. He overlooked the people on the dance floor and enjoyed the view of the glamorously dressed ladies.

However, there was no lust in his eyes; they were as calm as a frozen lake. From the corner of his eyes, he stole glances at the hanging chandelier and the nearby Duke Negan who was looking at the beautiful figures passing by.

The Duke was wearing a well-ironed navy uniform with red ribbons attached to the medals on his shoulders. He preferred to wear his military uniform on formal occasions, in remembrance of his decades of illustrious service while in the military.

However, he had put on much weight since then. His once-sharp gray eyes had been left turbid and filled with desire. However, he took good care of himself, as the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, lips, and forehead were faint, and his black hair was still thick and luxuriant.

That was Pallas Negan, the current Duke Negan, the main supporter of the Conservative Party, the brother of Prime Minister Aguesid, one of the richest and most powerful men in the Loen Kingdom.

At the same time, he was also the reason why Qilangos had sneaked into Backlund!

The thought of assassinating such an important figure makes me shiver in excitement... Qilangos retracted his gaze and closed his eyes.

He was willing to accept the commission because he had been offered a sufficiently attractive price, and it was also because Qilangos loved adventure and enjoyed taking on difficult challenges.

If this assassination is successful, my fame will spread across the Northern and Southern Continents, placing me above the Four Kings. And I'll receive a card, a card which contains the mystery of God that Emperor Roselle created! Qilangos suppressed his excitement and lowered his head to examine his left hand.

Creeping Hunger had become transparent. It was impossible to tell that "Baron Gramir" was wearing a glove via the naked eye or through contact.

This is such a mystical item... If it wasn't for this, a Sequence 6 like me wouldn't have achieved the rank of Pirate Admiral... Thoughts flashed through his mind as bouts of regret surged within Qilangos.

In his years as a pirate, he had seen and interacted with many Beyonders. Among them were members of the Aurora Order who enjoyed adventuring at the ends of the Sonia Sea.

So, he knew that Creeping Hunger was still rather different from a real Shepherd.

Firstly, the speed of switching states was too slow. It required at least a second, but a real Shepherd could switch instantly. Secondly, the controlled soul could only use one to three abilities before the person died. As for what abilities could be used and how powerful they were, that all depended on luck. On the other hand, a real Shepherd could decide on the three abilities. They didn't have to gamble like they were at a casino. Lastly, Creeping Hunger could only have five souls at the same time, while a real Shepherd could have seven.

Of course, both had the same restriction, which was that they could only control one soul at a time, and they could only use the soul's corresponding Beyonder powers and their own Beyonder powers. If they wanted to replace one of the souls with a new soul, the procedure would be irreversible.

Qilangos went through seven or eight years of adjustment and finally settled with five souls. Their abilities complemented one another and made their owner very terrifying.

Because of the constant adjustments and experimentation that he did over the years, there were rumors among the pirates that claimed that Vice Admiral Hurricane was omnipotent.

During the ardent dance music, Qilangos rehearsed the subsequent actions he would take in his mind. He sighed with regret in his heart.

It's a pity that I didn't find the Traveler over the past few days. Otherwise, I wouldn't have to worry about anything tonight.

If he had captured the woman that was most likely a Traveler, Qilangos wouldn't have hesitated to feed one of the five souls that he was Grazing to the Creeping Hunger.

To him, a Traveler's ability would be invaluable!

Qilangos stole a glance at the huge crystal chandelier hanging from the rooftop and decided to wait no longer.

The soul that he controlled currently had only one ability, which was to change his appearance. But it didn't possess any power to fight against other Beyonders. However, the transformation ability was still very useful, and Qilangos hadn't been willing to replace it with something else all this time.

The good thing was that no matter which soul he controlled, Qilangos could use his Wind-blessed Beyonder powers at the same time.

Finally, he acted as though his gaze was locking onto the curvy figure of a noble's wife before he swept it towards Duke Negan and all the gentlemen around him.

Duke Negan is a staunch follower of the Lord of Storms, and he is a key figure in the influence the Church of Storms has on politics. There must be a Beyonder from the Church of Storms beside him who's protecting him. Although the Negan family isn't an ancient thousand-year-old family, he's one of the wealthiest and powerful men in the kingdom. He's definitely searched for Sequence potion formulas in secret or hired Beyonders... Qilangos's thoughts surged. He mentally eliminated gentlemen who were nobles and officers before locking his eyes on the man who was constantly beside Duke Negan.

The man was brown-haired, blue-eyed, and wearing a black tuxedo. He was almost expressionless while he remained vigilant of his surroundings constantly.

Qilangos nodded indiscernibly and pressed his right hand forward slightly.

Whoosh!

A sudden gust of wind swept in the area above the dance floor, extinguishing the chandelier's candles.

At the moment between light and darkness, while everyone's attention was drawn away, a few wind blades slashed at the same spot on a metal chain supporting the crystal chandelier guised among the gusts of wind.

Creak!

With a harsh, shattering noise, the huge crystal chandelier plummeted straight to the dance floor. It made a loud crash, and people screamed in surprise. Shards of debris flew, cutting guests and leaving them screaming in pain and fear.

The darkened hall was suddenly full of opportunities. Qilangos's glove squirmed and changed, condensing into a golden surface.

His expression was imposing and his eyes saw through the darkness as he fixed his gaze onto the man next to Duke Negan.

Suddenly, Qilangos's eyes shone like lightning.

The Beyonder who was in charge of protecting Duke Negan suddenly let out a tragic scream and fell on the ground holding his head. He rolled around and struggled.

With a swoosh, Qilangos's figure dashed through the darkness and charged at Duke Negan.

However, in the deep recesses of his eyes, it reflected his target who didn't show any signs of panic. It was of utmost confidence.

Duke Negan's plump figure stood erect on the spot and observed the incoming assassin as if he were looking down on him.

He lifted his right hand and pushed forward. He murmured in ancient Hermes, "Imprison!"

In silence, Qilangos suddenly stopped. He was suddenly surrounded by a transparent wall, something that wrapped around him like a sticky liquid.

It made him seem like an insect in amber, or a prisoner in prison.

The leader of the Conservative Party nobles, the hereditary Duke Pallas Negan was a Beyonder himself—a very strong Beyonder!

Duke Negan spoke in a low voice again and waved his right hand.

"Flog!"

Pa! Pa!

Qilangos seemed to be whipped by a shapeless whip. His clothing tore from the whipping as his skin was lacerated, revealing white bone.

Then, Duke Negan leaned forward and held his right first. He declared in an imposing manner, "Death!"

Pa! His arm waved as his entire body slammed into Qilangos's head with numerous afterimages. His fist had struck his target's head in an unavoidable manner.

Kacha! Qilangos's head shattered, but the surroundings shattered as well. Duke Negan remained standing at his original spot. It was just a dream.

It was unknown when the pirate admiral had already switched his ability and entered the Nightmare state.

Unlike an ordinary Nightmare, he could still move his body after he dragged people into a dream!

Qilangos stealthily appeared behind Duke Negan, and his cold gaze locked onto the Duke.

Wrapped with high-speed spiraling winds, his right fist stabbed into the target's vest like a sharp blade.

Whoosh!

Amidst the howling of the wind, Qilangos's right fist punched straight through Duke Negan's body and through his heart. But Duke Negan's figure rapidly turned transparent, just like a soul that was summoned.

After the nearly formless figure dissipated, Duke Negan appeared before the French door on the other side of the winding corridor.

He wore a scrutinizing smile.

Another Beyonder... They prepared ahead of time? To lay an ambush for me?

How is that possible?!

Although Qilangos was unwilling to accept this fact, he dealt with it calmly.

The glove on his left hand squirmed and took on the form of dark golden scales. His irises grew pale and became vertical.

Then, a shapeless wave swept from every direction. Ladies and gentlemen were thrown into a state of uncontrollable fear at the same time. They left their hiding places and ran around aimlessly. The scene became chaotic.

The Beyonders didn't dare to act recklessly as they were worried they might hurt their relatives and friends.

Seizing the opportunity, Qilangos ran quickly as hurricanes whirled around him. He smashed through one of the resting room doors before smashing through an oriel window.

Amidst the shattering sound, he leaped outside and flew a distance away from Duke Negan's mansion with the aid of the wind.

The moment he landed, Qilangos immediately ran towards a forest ahead of him. It was a municipal garden—an escape route he had scouted out a while ago.

Once he shook off his pursuers, he could change his appearance and blend into the massive population of Backlund of more than five million people.

That was also the reason why he dared to accept such a difficult mission!

After a while, there was gale blowing towards Duke Negan's mansion. The Cardinal of the Church of Storms, the Archbishop of Backlund, Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake brought a few Mandated Punishers and flew towards the mansion.

He couldn't inform the other Beyonders in time.

Alger was one of the members that arrived with Archbishop Ace. However, he was in a bad mood because he saw the broken windows and the other Beyonders running out of the mansion.

It meant that Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos had escaped.

CHAPTER 191: UNCLEAR MOTIVES

Qilangos lost his pursuers with the help of the wind after crossing a man-made lake.

He surveyed his surroundings, intending to create the illusion that he had entered a ditch to escape into the Tussock River before turning to the financial center of Backlund, the Hillston Borough.

At that moment, his field of vision suddenly blurred. He saw the colors around him saturate in the darkness.

The green trees became greener, their red fruits even redder. The dark blackness of the water became darker. Everything appeared to be splashed with pastel paint.

Under the sky where the crimson moon was obscured, there were many indescribable, transparent figures, as well as different lustrous splendors that contained mysterious knowledge.

Qilangos found himself coming to a halt as he floated in midair. Beneath his feet, dark water continually rose towards him. Under the water were pale white palms, reaching out for him.

Not good! Qilangos realized that he had been ambushed.

And the ambusher was definitely not weak!

A giant humanoid skeleton suddenly appeared before him. The monster was four meters tall, and burning in its eye sockets were pitch black flames. The bones on its body were blurry and illusory.

Qilangos gave his enemy an expressionless look as he let out a sneer.

At the same time, the glove on his left hand released a radiant light, appearing as if it was cast out of pure gold.

Qilangos leaned back and spread his arms wide, as though he was trying to hug the sun.

A bolt of pure, burning brilliance descended from the sky, enveloping the giant skeleton. The pastel-like world quaked in response, and the pale hands under the dark water evaporated one by one.

This was the Beyonder powers of the Priest of Light!

It was a Beyonder power from the Sun's Sequence 5 pathway!

It was the nemesis of the undead!

The radiant pillar of light dissipated, and the pitch black flames of the giant skeleton instantly extinguished. It then turned transparent as it disintegrated in the air.

Before Qilangos had the time to use the abilities of the Priest of Light to dispel the pastel-like world, his expression abruptly turned rigid.

He saw another giant skeleton appear to his left. It was also four meters tall, its eyes burning with a black flame, identical to the monster from before.

Immediately following that, the same skeletal monster appeared around Qilangos, one after another. One, two, three... there were more than a hundred of them!

More than a hundred pairs of burning black flames cast their gaze onto their target at the same time.

Underneath him, the dark water surface rose higher, almost coming into contact with Qilangos's feet.

Pale white hands extended outward, flailing them around constantly, as though they were grabbing at a life-saving straw.

...

"Spread out and pursue him. Try to corner him," Instructed the Cardinal—Ace Snake. He conjured a typhoon and took to the air, flying toward the direction where Qilangos had fled.

Duke Negan and the rest didn't join the ranks of Mandated Punishers in consideration of their statuses; instead, they stood at the windows or balconies to observe. It was also at this moment when the ordinary nobles who were running around frantically slowly calmed down.

Due to the darkness and the undulating shouts, they were unsure of what exactly happened. All they knew was that Duke Negan might have encountered an assassin.

Alger Wilson clenched his jaw and ran out of Duke Negan's mansion, following the path of the municipal garden into the Hillston Borough.

He wasn't willing to miss this opportunity, no matter how small the hope was!

Suddenly, he heard a voice which was carried to him by the wind, "There's no need to continue the pursuit."

No need to continue the pursuit? The voice of Cardinal Snake... Alger stopped after just running a few steps forward. He turned to look into the sky, puzzled.

He saw Cardinal Snake, who was wearing a black robe adorned with many storm symbols, floating above the forest and the man-made lake and staring down.

Alger creased his brows and sped over to where the Cardinal was without considering the reason.

As he neared his position, he made use of his Seafarer abilities to get a clearer look.

The Spellsinger of God showed no expression, but his posture made it evident that he was serious. His exposed white hair that peeked out from under his black hat swayed with the wind, accentuating his stern silver eyes.

Alger retracted his gaze and ran out of the forest.

The scene of the calm pond reflecting the crimson moonlight suddenly appeared in his eyes. On the pond's surface, a tall figure was floating near the bank.

That figure had a unique wide jaw, his brown hair was tied in a ponytail. His dark green eyes were cold, yet blank.

Qilangos!

Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos!

Alger was taken aback at first, then he felt both surprise and joy. He couldn't believe his eyes. and even suspected that the darkness was causing him to hallucinate.

Before he could react, he suddenly saw Qilangos's face rot rapidly. It oozed a yellow-green liquid, his flesh peeling off piece by piece.

Pat! Pat! Pat!

All that was left of Qilangos's face was a skull, his two vacant eyeballs fell from their sockets and onto the ground beside the lake.

Qilangos fell apart completely. His clothes draped over his rotting flesh and white bones and blocked the sparkling radiance.

In less than twenty seconds, one of the Seven Pirate Admirals, Qilangos, had died mysteriously in front of Alger's eyes.

This shocking scene was etched deeply into Alger's mind. It made him suspect if he was having a terrifying nightmare.

What was happening?

Didn't Qilangos escape successfully?

Why did he die so simply, yet so mysteriously here?

What did he encounter, for him to lose his life in such a short amount of time...

He's a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed, the owner of Creeping Hunger!

Who did it?

What was the motive for killing Qilangos...

Just as countless ideas flooded Alger's mind, he heard Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake's, charismatic voice, "Did you give the information to anyone else?

"Is there anyone else who knows of this information?"

Alger quickly calmed down. He glanced at Qilangos's remains and gave an explanation that he had prepared.

"I reported the information to you the moment I found out about it."

He couldn't help but grumble inwardly. *If it wasn't for the fact that Ace Snake had gone for a walk along the Tussock River, forcing me to spend time finding him, Qilangos might not have even escaped Duke Negan's mansion!*

Of course, he didn't dare say this in front of a High-Sequence Beyonder. He could only respectfully and humbly continue, "The personnel who received the information directly even sacrificed himself for it, and no one opened the letter during its transfer, I can vouch for this.

"But I cannot confirm if there was a leak at the source of this information. Since we could learn of it, others might have too."

As Alger spoke, he formulated some guesses about who killed Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos.

The person or organization who tasked Qilangos to assassinate Duke Negan? Since Qilangos had already successfully escaped and there was no threat of any information leaks, there's no need to kill him... If it were me, I would get Qilangos to lay low and try another assassination attempt when everyone was certain that he had left Backlund...

Also, Qilangos only trusts himself, so he wouldn't tell his assassination plan to anyone. Duke Negan has been organizing gatherings lately in preparation for his bill proposal in September, so there are abundant opportunities. Other than Qilangos himself, there's no one who can correctly predict when he would strike. Uunless that person was a Prophet... But that is unlikely...

Other factions? Not possible. Miss Justice prayed to Mr. Fool to relay the information the moment she noticed a problem. There was no way another organization could've received the information at the same time...

Mr. Fool... Alger was shocked as he thought of a possibility.

The person who struck was Mr. Fool's Blessed!

He happened to be in Backlund and thus lent a hand!

The more he thought about it, the more Alger felt that this guess was close to the truth.

Only the members and subordinates of the Tarot Club could've received the information in time!

Only the help of The Fool's Blessed could make it seem so mysterious and without motive!

Just as he was immersed in his thoughts, Cardinal Snake fell silent for a moment. He told the rest of the Mandated Punishers who were making their way over, "Qilangos is dead. A HighSequence Beyonder, or someone who used a Sealed Artifact of a similar-level killed him. But this is rather dangerous and highly unlikely.

"After a preliminary analysis, I believe that the High-Sequence Beyonder is of the pathway of Death, perhaps a member of the Numinous Episcopate, but not someone I know of. There's also the possibility of it being a member of another secret organization.

“The motive is unclear.”

The Numinous Episcopate originated from the Southern

Continent. Legend has it that it was first formed by a descendant of Death in an attempt to revive Death. They were nearly eradicated after the Southern Continent was colonized, but they stubbornly survived and spread toward the countries of the Northern Continent.

A High-Sequence Beyonder... Yes, only a High-Sequence Beyonder could kill Qilangos in such a short amount of time! Just a mere Blessed of Mr. Fool is already at such a high sequence... That’s a Demigod! Alger once again looked at the pile of flesh and bone. He felt dissociated from everything as if he had lost all his emotion. He stood there in a daze, watching everything.

If I happened to betray Mr. Fool one day... He suddenly had such a thought.

Immediately, the terrifying scene of Qilangos rapidly rotting appeared in his mind.

Alger couldn’t help but shiver and lower his head.

At the same time, he relaxed.

Since he couldn’t escape or fight back, then he could only choose to be loyal.

Phew... With Qilangos dead, no one can threaten me with that secret anymore! He exhaled, his worries completely vanishing.

...

In Duke Negan’s mansion, Audrey Hall, who was discussing the assassination with her mother and the other nobles, saw her father appear at the door.

She found an excuse and left the resting room for the balcony at the main hall.

“Father, is something wrong?” Audrey looked at Earl Hall with her green eyes.

Her green eyes had come from her mother, not her father.

Earl Hall smiled.

“It’s been resolved, my child. You need not worry any longer.

“Hmm... Did you tell anyone that Baron Gramir was an imposter?”

“No.” Audrey shook her head firmly.

I only told an almost godlike existence... She added in her heart.

She thought for a moment, then explained herself, “After I told you, I went to the bathroom, then to where Mother was. You can ask her.”

“I see.” Earl Hall nodded and didn’t say anything else before mentioning, “Qilangos is dead. Someone

killed him.” “Who?” Audrey was as shocked as she was excited.

“No idea. We can’t even figure out why the murderer killed Qilangos. It’s truly incomprehensible.” Earl Hall paused. “Perhaps, it’s a person or an organization, a secret and powerful organization.”

Unclear motive... A secret, powerful organization... Could it be Mr. Fool’s Blessed? It could be our Tarot Club! Audrey suddenly had an epiphany.

Audrey analyzed many things at once as her mind whirled.

Mr. Hanged Man said that Qilangos was a lone wolf who doesn't trust anyone. Only he would know of his own plan. Other than my early discovery of him, there shouldn't have been anyone else who knew he would attempt the assassination tonight...

I only told Father and Mr. Fool that I suspected that Qilangos was disguised as Baron Gramir...

Although there's a telegram cable in Duke Negan's mansion and he would've been able to send out information in time to ask for help, there's no reason to hide that... Dad's puzzlement implies that the powerful being that killed Qilangos wasn't within their expectations...

Combining all of the above, I can almost be certain that the person who killed Qilangos was Mr. Fool's Blessed!

Plus, only the unique model of the Tarot Club can create such a strange situation with unclear motives!

Qilangos was a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed, and he had the mystical item—the Creeping Hunger. To be able to quickly kill him without leaving any traces behind, it could only be a High-Sequence Beyonder known also as Demigods, right? Or maybe he used a Sealed Artifact which possesses immense danger?

Regardless of the possibility, it shows that Mr. Fool's Blessed is extremely powerful...

Mr. Fool lives up to his reputation!

Regardless, I certainly provided clues, so Mr. Hanged Man has to carry out his promise and pass me the pituitary gland of a Rainbow Salamander!

This should be our Tarot Club's very first mission, right?

One of the Seven Pirate Admirals, Qilangos, died because of us!

Looking at his daughter who seemed excited, Earl Hall, who was a handsome man in his youth, coughed lightly and warned his daughter with a mask of solemnity, "Audrey, I know that you're very interested in mysticism, and I normally tolerate it. But you mustn't be involved in this. You can't even ask about it. You will be introduced by the Queen to the Backlund social scene events by the end of this year. As an adult, you should clearly know and remember that a terrifying Beyonder, or a powerful, hidden organization, is equivalent to danger. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, Father," Audrey replied charmingly. "I was just a little curious."

"Curiosity won't do either!" Earl Hall emphasized, and he couldn't help but let out a helpless smile.

"Okay!" Audrey nodded obediently.

I understand the whole incident better than you do anyway... She made a silly face in her head.

Earl Hall thought and said with a gentle smile, "Regardless, you are the heroine tonight, the savior of Duke Negan. Half of the reason why Qilangos is dead is partially because of you, and it's the same with the bounty. Of course, if there's no one that admits to killing Qilangos and comes to receive the bounty, the remaining half of it will be yours too. Added together, it will be ten thousand pounds in total.

"Hmm, the bounties set up by the Intis Republic, the Feysac Empire, and other countries and organizations could be received as well. After conversion, there should be about twenty thousand pounds in total.

"Duke Negan promised that he would give you his holiday estate at Desi Bay as a gift. It includes a huge rubber tree plantation. I don't know the annual profit exactly, but it definitely won't be low. He spent eight thousand pounds to buy it back then and later, even built a house and purchased good quality seeds for planting."

Audrey, who already had an inheritance of three hundred thousand pounds, was considered rich. However, a reward that was almost forty thousand pounds was still a huge amount of income. Many noble ladies wouldn't even receive such a figure as a dowry.

In an allied marriage of a noble and a businessman in August, Miss Mary Oldbury, the daughter of a millionaire, only had an eighty-thousand-pound dowry.

I never considered the bounty... Audrey muttered inwardly.

Suddenly, she thought of something. If she were to receive the bounty and her name spread, The Hanged Man could easily find out who Justice was.

This can't happen! As a member of the Tarot Club, I have to maintain a sense of mystery! Audrey looked towards her dad and reorganized her words.

"Dad, I'm a little worried..."

"Why? What happened?" Earl Hall asked in concern.

"If it were to spread that I found out that Qilangos was disguised as Baron Gramir, I'm afraid that his underlings would take revenge on me. I'm afraid that whoever instructed Qilangos to assassinate Duke Negan would target me..." Audrey tried to make herself seem pitiful, weak, and helpless.

"I'll hire someone to protect you," Earl Hall replied. Then, he nodded faintly and said, "there's really no need for you to take such a risk. Plus, the person that killed Qilangos took the Creeping Hunger. Of course, to a High-Sequence Beyonder, that wouldn't be a strong enough motive for interfering... Yes, I'll inform Duke Negan to keep this a secret and tell someone else to receive the bounty on your behalf and compensate you in

private."

Then, Earl Hall smiled and said, "You really are my daughter. You earned forty thousand pounds so easily. This is more than one-tenth of your current wealth."

The three hundred thousand pounds was what he had set aside for her in advance. He would still add in another part when she got married as his daughter's inheritance.

"Am I as good as you were?" Audrey happily asked in reply.

Earl Hall shook his head and laughed.

"Much better than I was. The profit from my very first business venture was only sixty pounds."

Audrey suddenly became extremely thrilled. The satisfaction derived from receiving a forty thousand pound bounty, getting her father's compliment, causing Qilangos's death, completing an extraordinary task, and the reward of a Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland that she was going to get from The Hanged Man amplified her happiness.

I really want to report this to Mr. Fool to get his reassurance... No, no way. A powerful, mysterious being killed Qilangos with an unknown motive. There might be someone observing me in secret, looking for clues regarding Qilangos's death. I can't show any hint of abnormality... Pui! There's nothing abnormal about me to begin with. As long as I don't attempt to recite Mr. Fool's honorary name...

Hmm, if Mr. Fool's Blessed was really the murderer, He must've already known the outcome. He wouldn't need me to report it to him... Well... do I need to share the bounty with the Blessed? No, no matter what kind of payment method is used to transfer twenty thousand pounds, it would definitely draw attention. I can't take the risk...

Plus, it has always been The Hanged Man who's been asking for help from Mr. Fool. Technically, he should pay the reward. Yes, yes, after all, he declared that he had many pages of Emperor Roselle's diary!

I'll try to gather more pages of the diary to thank Mr. Fool for answering my prayers. He definitely wouldn't be interested in crass money...

Audrey quickly determined her next course of action

...

In Duke Negan's mansion, in a secret study room.

The fat and tall Duke sat on a high back chair behind a desk. He was smoking a cigar as he looked at the Spellsinger of God—Ace Snake, Prime Minister Aguesid Negan, and the others opposite him.

"Based on our current knowledge, we still aren't certain of the identity of the High-Sequence Beyonder that killed Qilangos." Prime Minister Aguesid Negan had just rushed over from the King's side.

Archbishop Snake nodded.

"We've determined that it wasn't any of the High-Sequence Beyonders that we're familiar with or the Numinous Episcopate either.

"We have sufficient reason to believe that it's a powerful, mysterious Beyonder we aren't aware of. Of course, we haven't eliminated the possibility that the person was using a dangerous Sealed Artifact."

Duke Negan held his cigar and said, "Maybe it wasn't just a High-Sequence Beyonder. There might be a hidden organization behind that person, a hidden organization that we don't know enough about. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to lay in ambush for Qilangos so accurately. Yes, perhaps one of the guests at tonight's ball is a member of theirs."

His brother, Prime Minister Aguesid stated solemnly, "Regardless of that possibility, we have to be careful. We have to quickly find out the identity of the High-Sequence Beyonder, the purpose of his presence in Backlund, and why he killed Qilangos."

A High-Sequence Beyonder that they didn't know about, who wandering in Backlund, was sufficient to draw attention from the government and three major Churches!

Although a Sequence 4 or Sequence 3 Beyonder might not be able to withstand the cannon attacks of their warships, there was no need for them to experience a frontal assault. They possessed too much of a mysterious power.

Hence, they were existences even more dangerous than ironclad warships. Hence the reason why they were called "Demigods"!

Spellsinger of God—Ace Snake stood up and said, "Let me make some arrangements and get into contact with the Church of Evernight and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery."

"His Majesty will allow the military and the intelligence agencies to cooperate," Prime Minister Aguesid promised.

...

In a hotel in the North Borough of Backlund.

Azik sat under a gas lamp and looked at the glove before him.

The glove was very thin, as though it was made from human skin. It seemed that as long as it was filled with flesh and blood, it would turn into a hand.

Azik looked at it for a very long time. His face suddenly contorted in agony and pain as he muttered, "I seem to, seem to have cooperated with them before..."

...

Klein didn't sleep well the entire night because he didn't receive any reports from Justice or The Hanged Man, nor did he receive any reply from Mr. Azik. He kept thinking about the outcome of the incident with Qilangos.

It must've been quite a scene if Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man didn't dare to contact me recklessly... But why didn't Mr. Azik reply to my letter? Did he not get involved, or was there an accident? Did Qilangos hurt him? Klein extended his hand and covered his mouth as he yawned. He got onto the trackless carriage that headed for Zouteland Street.

"Extra! Extra! Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos killed in Backlund!

"Extra! Extra! Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos killed in Backlund!"

...

Just as the carriage was about to set off, Klein suddenly heard the paperboy, which was also one of Emperor Roselle's inventions.

Klein was momentarily stunned as he quickly fished out a penny and bought the Tingen Morning Post. Many passengers made the same choice.

He opened the newspaper and quickly read the headline.

Pirate Qilangos shot dead by Duke's bodyguard in Backlund.

Qilangos died? Mr. Azik did it? Klein fell into deep thought and lampooned himself, *As the boss behind the scenes, I actually had to find out the outcome from the newspapers...*

The article covering what happened to Qilangos wasn't long, and all it stated was the time, place, people involved, and the outcome. As the saying goes, the more succinct the content, the more serious the situation.

Something that happened in Backlund at eight or nine last night is already being reported in Tingen City this morning. The spread of information in this world isn't too slow due to the exceptional contributions of Emperor Roselle. It must've been one of the nobles or ministers who attended the ball who leaked this information to some reporter, then that reporter used the telegraph to send this sensational news to the news companies in various counties...

The morning papers are usually drafted at night and printed after midnight before being distributed in the morning. There was just enough time to make changes and publish this article...

Just based on this news, the Tingen Morning Post would be able to sell an extra thousand copies. And that's only considering just this city...

Klein's thoughts became more and more distracted before finally calming down.

Since Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos is dead, that means that even if Mr. Azik is injured, it wouldn't be too serious...

If it was serious, he definitely would've been captured by the Mandated Punishers or Duke Negan's Beyonder bodyguards that were in pursuit of Qilangos. And when facing such a situation, Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man would definitely try their best to report it to me. The latter not happening is enough to indicate that everything is under control...

Yes, if Mr. Azik doesn't give me a reply, or if Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man do not pray to me by tonight, I'll blow the copper whistle once again to summon the messenger and send over a letter of inquiry...

Relaxing, Klein shifted his attention away from the newspaper, then he surveyed the public carriage.

Most of the people who could afford transport like this could read, and under the influence of the term "extra," many had bought the Tingen Morning Post. Now, a few of them were quietly discussing the incident.

"The King of Pirates and the admirals have been terrorizing the sea routes for a long time. They back off when they see the battleships of the various countries, but they don't pay much regard to merchant ships... Even though Qilangos had only been inducted as one of the Seven Pirate Admirals for less than a decade, he's the first to be killed by the government..."

"Frankly, I'm curious as to what he was doing in Backlund? When a pirate leaves the ocean, death is a foreseeable outcome."

"Let's hope that there will be a more detailed report in the future."

"Holy Lord of Storms, I wish to know which of Duke Negan's bodyguards killed Qilangos. His bounty was a full 10,000 pounds!"

"10,000 pounds... If I had 10,000 pounds, I would immediately quit my job and buy two or three medium-sized nurseries. I would invest in the shares of some colonizing companies and railroad companies, and receive a stable dividend every year..."

"That's only the bounty of this kingdom. Intis, Feysac, Feynapotter, and some merchant organizations also have bounties for Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos. I sure hope that there's a newspaper that will give a full list of the bounties." *10,000 pounds?* Klein was shocked to hear that.

With his already impressive pay, he would have to take twenty years to be able to save up that much money even without eating or drinking.

If only... Forget it, there's nothing I can do either. It would be impossible for me to claim the bounty... He folded the newspaper a little dejectedly and looked out the window of the carriage.

At this point, he finally concluded that the incident with Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos had come to a close. All that was left was to tie up the loose ends, such as the batch of Roselle's diary that The Hanged Man had promised him.

...

Backlund, Cherwood Borough.

Fors Wall and Xio Derecha were walking along the street towards the nearest branch of the Varvat Bank.

"My money seems to disappear without me noticing." Fors sighed.

Xio felt the same way.

"That's right."

"Luckily, my book, Stormwind Mountain Villa, is rather popular, and there are still royalties being sent to my account. Otherwise, I'd have to find a clinic or a hospital and become a doctor once again." Fors let out a sigh, both in satisfaction and in worry.

Xio was silent for a moment before carefully asking, "Will the investigation of Qilangos affect your status as an author? After all, we could be under the attention of the Mandated Punishers, Nighthawks, and the rest..."

"No, the only one they would focus on is you." Fors laughed. "You were the one who sent someone to make a police report. Same for the one who sent the letter and the one famous among the alleys and gangs of the East Borough. As for me, Fors Wall, I'm still the popular best-selling author."

Xio said in a daze, "So you've just been accompanying me all this time?"

Fors stroked her hair and laughed.

"Don't you find that this was an interesting experience? This experience has provided me with the much-needed inspiration for my work. My next novel will be about a sudden brutal murder."

Xio paused, not knowing how to continue the conversation. All she could do was continue walking forward bitterly, forgetting to make a turn until Fors dragged her back.

At that moment, they heard a paperboy shout.

"Extra! Extra! Vice Admiral Hurricane Qilangos killed in Backlund!"

...

Ah? What? Xio and Fors looked at each other in confusion.

They only came to their senses after the paperboy repeated himself multiple times.

"What? Qilangos is dead?" Fors couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"He's dead! How did he die so suddenly!" Xio, who was trying to hide from the prosecution of this merciless pirate, was shocked and dazed.

This... doesn't this have to follow a normal procedure? First, they find clues to confirm Qilangos's motive, then they would gather powerful Beyonders and ambush him. Killing the pirate was the last step... But, Qilangos was killed even though the first step hadn't been completed yet... He died just like that... Fors and Xio exchanged looks as if they were two marble statues.

Nearly a minute later, Xio charged towards the paperboy and bought a copy of the Tussock Times.

This was one of the three most distributed newspapers in the Loen Kingdom.

“Oh... Qilangos is really dead, killed by Duke Negan’s bodyguard. Oh Goddess, Negan’s bodyguard is...” Xio gasped, leaving out the “a powerful Beyonder,” that she had wanted to say.

Fors looked at her good friend in pity.

“To think that you would believe everything the newspapers

say...”

“Alright, perhaps someone realized Qilangos’s motive in advance, and the Mandated Punishers, Nighthawks, Machinery Hivemind, and the military cooperated and executed a successful ambush...” Xio froze and exhaled. “We don’t need to worry about it any longer. We can go back to our normal lives, but we have to avoid the sphere of influence of that police station from before.”

She looked at Fors and asked, a little worried, “How much do you think Miss Audrey will pay us now? I know that a few hundred pounds wouldn’t be too much to her, but we haven’t really completed what she asked of us...”

“No, at least we made Qilangos appear on his own accord. The reason he rushed to take action and fall for the ambush was definitely in some part due to our contributions,” Fors consoled her. “With Miss Audrey’s generosity, she’ll give us half the reward even if she’s not giving us all of it.”

“Let’s hope so...” Xio took in a deep breath and had an expectant gaze. “I wonder who will claim that bounty of 10,000 pounds...”

“It sure invites the envy of others. If I had that much money, I’d have become a Sequence 7 or 6 long ago, but I missed the opportunity time and time again!” Fors also felt a little sorry, but she reminded her friend, “Xio, let us not contact Miss Audrey for the time being. Let her contact us on her own accord. There are too many hidden details surrounding the death of Qilangos. Looking for Miss Audrey abruptly could put us in a dangerous situation.”

Xio first nodded before saying in surprise, “How did you know that I was thinking of heading to

Empress Borough?” “Try guessing?” Fors laughed in response.

...

After a busy morning, Klein returned to the Blackthorn Security Company. He reported to Dunn Smith, “Captain, the people connected to Lanevus that I’m in charge of investigating have no problems. They were merely victims, not associated with any Beyonder incidents.”

Dunn placed both his elbows on his desk.

“Then stop that for the time being. We shall place our focus on the more likely suspects after the rest of the members have finished with their investigations. We cannot direct all our manpower onto this incident. We have to guard against other sudden incidents.”

“Alright.” Klein was about to stand up and head to lunch when he suddenly heard knocking on the door.

“Please enter,” Dunn said in his mellow voice.

The handle moved and Rozanne peeked inside.

“Captain, someone is here with a mission.”

A mission... This seems to be targeted at the Blackthorn Security Company and not the Nighthawks team. So, who mistakenly came to us this time? Klein wondered to himself.

Dunn thought for a moment before saying, “We can go hear the request out and reject it if it’s too troublesome.”

He arranged his shirt and vest as he walked out of the office. He made his way through the partition and towards the sofa in the receptionist area. Klein and Rozanne followed curiously behind.

There were two ladies on the sofa, both of them were wearing black hats and dresses without any extra color.

One of the ladies was plump and had fair skin. Her face was completely obscured by the black veil of her hat.

Klein felt a sense of familiarity when he saw her, as though he had seen her somewhere before.

Just as he was recalling, he heard the skinnier lady beside her speak.

“The mission we would like to entrust to you is for you to track and monitor Madam Sharon and find evidence of her crimes.” *Madam Sharon...* Klein suddenly had an epiphany, and recalled where the sense of familiarity came from.

The lady that remained silent was the wife of Member of Parliament Maynard, the daughter of the New Party’s leader.

She finds it hard to accept the death of her husband and is unwilling to accept the conclusion the police department came to, so she came to a security company in private to do another investigation?

To think that she came directly to us... Klein shook his head and laughed to himself.

"Madam Sharon?" Dunn obviously knew of Baron Khoy's widow, a famous socialite in Tingen.

Maynard's wife turned her head to shoot a glance at the scrawny lady who came with her to the Blackthorn Security Company, but she didn't speak for herself.

The scrawny lady in the black dress and hat weighed her words before she spoke.

"Yes, Madam Sharon, the wife of the deceased Baron Khoy. She, she..."

She stammered, then suddenly spat in anger, "She's a b*tch!"

Upon hearing her curse, Klein suddenly recalled the porno that he had seen and Madam Sharon's behavior which appeared nervous on the surface but was calm deep down. That made him believe the rumors about her, and he felt sorry for the deceased old baron.

It's not like Madam Sharon can't remarry. But her loose behavior... really makes the old baron's grave a perfect nesting ground for cuckoos...

Dunn didn't have much of a change in his facial expression. He sat on the sofa opposite and said with his mellow voice, "But that doesn't make her a criminal.

"You know clearly, and I know it clearly too. Madam Sharon is very influential in Tingen. If we were to follow her and monitor her, there could be very serious consequences for us."

"She's a criminal!" the scrawny lady said angrily. "She caused my brother's death, but those lovers of hers pressured the police department and made them pronounce that my brother died of excessive drinking and continuous indulgence in sexual pleasure. Th-they are all criminals!"

Those... Klein realized that the scrawny lady was Maynard's sister while feeling sorry for the old baron once again.

That's right, for such a scandal, she would definitely not send a maidservant here. It's better if the request is made by family... He nodded his head in enlightenment.

Mrs. Maynard patted the back of the scrawny woman's hand and added with a deep yet cold voice, "She's a criminal! If you suffer any damages because of this, I will compensate you for your losses."

That tone... She lives up to her identity as the daughter of the New Party's head. If the police department wasn't very confident with the result of my mediumship ritual, I'm afraid they would've submitted under her pressure... Klein lampooned inwardly.

Dunn was silent for nearly twenty seconds before he said, "Alright... I have another question. Why do you seem to be so certain that we would find something?"

The scrawny lady nodded and said, "The tobacco merchant, Vickroy, introduced us here. He said that you're the cream of the crop in this industry and can complete missions that others aren't capable of completing."

The tobacco merchant Vickroy... Who's he? Klein looked at Captain subconsciously and noticed that Dunn Smith looked really confused.

I'm so silly, why did I hope for Captain to remember something like this... After all, even I don't quite remember... He sighed.

The scrawny lady saw that the two elite mercenaries looked confused, so she added, "You saved his kidnapped son."

Oh, him... That kidnap case led me to the discovery of the Antigonus family's notebook... Klein was suddenly enlightened.

Dunn nodded slightly and said, "I understand."

Upon seeing this, the scrawny woman laid out her offer, “You are to tail and monitor th-that b*tch for two weeks. Even if you don’t find any evidence of her crime, you have to take note of who visited her and who she visited. We will pay fifty pounds for this.

“And if you find evidence of her crimes, we would pay another additional two hundred pounds.”

That’s a large sum of money... When Klein suddenly recalled that he had only spent seven pounds to hire Detective Henry to gather so much information about red chimney houses, he became a little ashamed.

Dunn thought for a moment before saying, “No problem, we can sign the contract now. You’ll have to pay a deposit of twenty pounds up front.”

Captain, we’re really lacking in manpower right now. There’s the huge case regarding Lanevus... Klein didn’t expect Dunn Smith to accept the mission although he, himself, was quite keen on accepting it.

Mrs. Maynard nodded slightly and said, “No problem. I believe in you. Please don’t disappoint me.”

Dunn smiled but kept quiet. He turned his head and told Rozanne, “Please write up a contract.”

When the contract was signed and the deposit was paid, Dunn watched Mrs. Maynard and the scrawny lady leave the Blackthorn Security Company. He then looked sideways at Klein and said, “This mission will be yours.” “Huh?” Klein looked confused.

Dunn smiled and said, “Didn’t you want to learn tailing techniques and monitoring skills? This is a great opportunity. It also turns out that you’re done with your part in the Lanevus case.”

“Alright...” Klein didn’t reject the assignment.

Just as he accepted, his mind began whirling quickly.

According to the rules, half of the mission’s commission is handed to Mrs. Orianna as additional funding for the team. The remaining would be split among the involved members. However, it seems like I’m the only one handling the case...

Regardless of whether the investigation succeeds, there will be at least twenty-five pounds of income. On top of that, I’ll receive my usual weekly pay... If I really could find some clues, I could even receive a hundred and twenty-five pounds!

Captain is a wise man!

Dunn stole a glance at him and said, “Learn the tailing techniques and monitoring skills from Leonard and Frye in the morning, and put your combat training on hold for this week. Yes... I think you’re quite well-trained already, so I’ll send someone to inform Gawain.”

Learn tailing techniques and monitoring skills from Leonard and Frye? That doesn’t seem very reliable... Klein was stunned. He could imagine Leonard using only one method which was playing his Feynapotter lute while singing melodious poetry. Then, he would probably seduce Madam Sharon to bed in order to “monitor her up close.” As for Frye, he had a unique air to him. He was cold and gloomy, so no matter where he went, he would catch the attention of others. How could such people make good spies?

As his thoughts churned, Klein replied seriously, “Alright.”

Dunn nodded slightly and walked towards the partition. Suddenly, he paused, turned around, and hesitated before he spoke.

“Do you remember the tobacco merchant? What’s was the kidnapping about?”

...So you didn’t remember anything or understood anything...

Why were you acting so staid and confident!? Klein facepalmed.

...

Based on Leonard's guidance, Klein wasn't in a hurry to tail Madam Sharon, even though he knew that she stayed on Osna Street in the East Borough.

"Until you know the target's routine, you can't tail your target recklessly. Plus, monitoring alone makes it difficult to take note of everything. Unless you don't eat, drink, sleep, and go home," Leonard had said. Hence, Klein followed his suggestion and found one of the mob bosses in the Hound Pub and spent five pounds to get his underlings to monitor Madam Sharon and record her daily routine.

Luckily, this can be reimbursed... Why does it feel like I'm subcontracting... On Friday afternoon, Klein received the investigation report from the mob boss.

Calling it an investigation report was an obvious insult to professional detectives. Not one of the mob boss's underlings was literate. They relied on drawings and symbols, which was then interpreted and organized by their semi-literate boss who had attended Sunday School for a year. Klein got a headache just from reading it and took quite a while to finish reading the report.

According to the surveillance, Madam Sharon seldom leaves her place recently. There aren't many guests who visit either... She might be affected by Maynard's death... Those mob *underlings are quite capable. They even gathered information from Madam Sharon's maidservant... Hmm, she will be attending the Conservative Party's banquet tonight. She might return home quite late, or maybe not return... This is an opportunity for me to put theory into practice.* Klein quickly decided to sneak into Madam Sharon's house and search through it.

With his duties regarding the Lanevus case over, the temporary suspension of combat training, and the end of the Qilangos incident, Klein only had two matters on hand. One was to investigate the red chimney houses, and the second was following and monitoring Madam Sharon. In other words, he was relatively free.

Two days ago, he had received Mr. Azik's reply. There was only one sentence on the letter.

"I obtained the Creeping Hunger and recalled something."

Klein had finally confirmed that it was Mr. Azik who killed Qilangos and that this amnesiac teacher of his who had a long life was a High-Sequence Beyonder. However, he didn't dare ask him what he had recalled with the aid of the Creeping Hunger. Azik obviously didn't want to talk about it. If he was willing to share, he would've described it directly in the letter.

In Klein's reply, he only reminded Mr. Azik that the Creeping Hunger yearned for the flesh, blood, and soul of living humans. He had to find a safe sealing method.

In addition, Justice and The Hanged Man had yet to pray to him, but Klein wasn't worried. He understood that both members were afraid of being monitored, so they didn't recite his name recklessly.

...

Gas street lamps illuminated the straight Osna Street at night while the crimson moon hung high above.

Klein, who had sneaked out with the Clown's balance and agility, leaped over the outer wall of Madam Sharon's house quietly.

Passing through the garden, he arrived by the side of the house. He climbed up the water pipe and slipped onto the balcony on the second floor.

Klein had never even climbed a tree successfully when he was young, so it was quite a monumental event.

He took out a tarot card from the pocket of his black trench coat, slotted it into the gap of the balcony door, lifted it lightly, and unlocked the door.

The servants are so careless... They didn't use an additional lock. Otherwise, I'd have to try entering by climbing through the window... Klein muttered silently and entered the house.

Based on the information provided by the mob boss, he found Madam Sharon's bedroom easily. He turned the knob and stepped into the room.

He closed the door carefully and suddenly smelled a faint fragrance. It reminded him of the fragrance of a woman that caused the blood vessels of other people to swell.

Klein felt a little faint, and he even felt his body reacting.

He immediately calmed down with Cogitation and made a selfdeprecating comment, "She's using an aphrodisiac as perfume?"

A few seconds later, Klein activated his Spirit Vision and surveyed the room, only to find how extravagantly decorated Madam Sharon's room was.

In a spacious area with a cloakroom that was ajar, there was a thick carpet, a blanket made with goose feathers, a makeup table strewn with skin care products and cosmetics, a dazzling array of jewelry, thin clothing and socks thrown over the rocking chair, and multiple decorative items adorned with gold silk. All of these entered Klein's field of vision.

What attracted Klein's attention the most was an unfinished oil painting. On the painting was the naked figure of Madam Sharon herself—her brown hair like a waterfall, her eyes like an innocent deer's, pure and limpid. But her curved eyebrows, sharp nose, and tender lips accentuated her form as a mature female. The two qualities fused together despite the contradiction, releasing an alarming temptation.

Klein only gave a cursory glance at the area under the neck for a moment. He wasn't trying to be gentlemanly. After all, he had already seen the porno, so why would he have scruples over a picture?

His attention had been grabbed by the pastels, palettes, and paintbrushes beside the painting, as well as a full-length silvercoated mirror.

This combination and their placement relative to each other gave Klein a weird thought that the painter was Madam Sharon herself, and not some artist she had seduced.

A beautiful woman with a great figure, flirtatious yet innocent, stripping and drawing herself while looking in the mirror to chronicle her beauty... It feels a little odd. Is Madam Sharon narcissistic? Klein gulped silently and retracted his gaze. He started to search for possible evidence of her crimes.

Following Leonard's and Frye's instructions, he kept his black gloves on as he searched. He had to keep the original position of everything in his memory to facilitate putting everything back after he was done.

This proved easy for an advanced Seer. If he forgot, he could use dream divination to recall the placement easily.

Of course, he had performed a divination before he left the house tonight. There was going to be no danger and he would be met with relative success.

That's something a good charlatan would do... even if I'm already a Clown... Klein lampooned himself. He spent twenty minutes searching Madam Sharon's room, but he didn't find anything noteworthy, nor did he see any light emitted by spirituality.

Finally, he stopped before a safe in the corner of the room.

The steel safe was a meter tall; thick and heavy. It gave the impression that it was unusually sturdy, as if it could only be opened using explosives.

This sure is a characteristic of the Age of Steam. There must be complicated machinery within the safe... Klein tried to open the safe but failed miserably.

He left the safe for last. He took off his left glove and unwound the topaz dangling on his left wrist.

Grabbing the silver chain and allowing the pendulum to fall, Klein dispelled the excitement that the fragrance in the room gave him and entered a state of Cogitation.

His eyes turned dark as he chanted to himself, "There is a secret room or hidden partition in this room.

"There is a secret room or hidden partition in this room."

...

After reciting it seven times, Klein's eyes regained their normal color. He looked at the dangling topaz, which was turning counterclockwise.

It was a negative result.

Klein nodded slightly and left Madam Sharon's room. According to the process from before, he went through the study, the living room, the greenhouse, and other parts of the house, but he didn't find any clues of value.

He didn't use Dowsing Rod Seeking since he didn't exactly know what he was looking for.

Klein took out his silver pocket watch and gave it a look. He confirmed the time before returning to Madam Sharon's bedroom.

Carefully closing the wooden door, Klein took out the silver dagger used for rituals and released his spirituality, allowing it to fuse with the powers of nature and seal the room.

He was going to summon himself!

He was going to go through the safe using his spirit and check the things inside!

Grandpa doesn't need to know how to lockpick! Klein proclaimed in Mandarin.

The process was simple since he was praying to himself. He didn't have to be too particular. Klein took out a candle infused with sandalwood and ignited it using his spirituality. That was going to be his altar.

"I!

"I summon in my name:

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

The incantation reverberated around Madam Sharon's bedroom. Klein's spirituality poured out from within him, gently fusing with the candle flame to become a gray, palm-sized veil of light.

He then took four steps counterclockwise, made his way through the mad ravings, and into the world above the gray fog.

He saw the Door of Summoning appear behind the seat of honor at the ancient long table. Klein was about to react when he froze.

I should perform a divination to see if I can discover any clues since I'm already here. Here, as well as removing any interference, my powers are also significantly boosted... Also, because of where I am now, performing a divination is akin to using an object Madam Sharon brings around with her everyday... He sat down and conjured a fountain pen and goatskin.

What should I divine? Klein slipped into deep thought*.* *Is there anything wrong with Madam Sharon?*

No, everyone makes mistakes, there would be something wrong with anyone.

Is Madam Sharon involved in a crime?

...No, that's not narrow enough either. As a famous socialite tied to the political sphere, it's natural that she would be associated with something dirty yet cannot be convicted for... Also, what is the definition of a crime anyway? The laws of the Loen Kingdom, or the laws of the Intis Republic, or is it up to me to decide?

...

Despite his many thoughts, Klein didn't want to delay it any further. After all, his physical body was still in the real world. Thus, he decided to confirm the past few divinations he did regarding the incident.

He picked up the pen and, without writing, he conjured a divination statement on the goatskin before him

"John Maynard's death was due to supernatural influences."

This was the divination he did when he went to Maynard's house to help the police. The answer he received last time was negative.

Grabbing the silver chain, he allowed the topaz pendulum to almost touch the statement on the goatskin. Klein half-closed his eyes and silently recited the divination statement, "John Maynard's death was due to supernatural influences. "John Maynard's death was due to supernatural influences."

...

After repeating it seven times, he opened his eyes and looked at the pendulum. His pupils constricted suddenly.

The topaz pendulum was spinning clockwise!

Clockwise meant a positive result!

Maynard's death was really due to supernatural influences!

Klein stared at the pendulum that was slowing down, his heart churning in turmoil.

My divination back then was influenced, disrupted...

Madam Sharon is a Beyonder, a rather powerful Beyonder? Or is there someone backing her, having helped in planning Maynard's death?

Did they want to remove a powerful opponent to the seat of mayor, to remove a future House of Commons Member of Parliament from the New Party?

Many thoughts raced through his mind as Klein wrote a new divination statement: "Madam Sharon is a Beyonder."

He recited the statement seven times, still using the pendulum technique. Klein used the location he was at, as well as the information he knew regarding Madam Sharon, to complete the divination. He saw an answer.

The answer was the clockwise rotation of the topaz pendulum: the answer was yes!

Madam Sharon is a Beyonder... Klein's nerves tensed. He didn't delay any further, immediately answering his own prayer and pushing open the mysterious door.

After a moment of chaos and dizziness, he saw Madam Sharon's bedroom and himself.

Klein floated to the front of the heavy safe and extended his right hand. He carefully extended his hand into the safe.

Since Madam Sharon was a Beyonder, he had to be wary of traps in the safe.

In such a state, where his soul was infused with powers of the mysterious space and his spirituality, Klein no longer needed divination. He would receive a warning when he was approaching something dangerous—a large portion of divination was obtaining revelations by allowing one's Astral Projection to roam in the spirit world. In other words, it was derived from one's spirituality.

Klein didn't notice anything unusual. when his nearlytransparent hand made it through the thick metal door.

After sweeping his hand, he leaned forward, plunging his entire spirit into the safe.

He saw that the inside of the safe was split into three sections. The first was filled with gold bars, thick stacks of cash, and even more precious jewelry. Another layer had sealed documents. Klein blew on them, but he didn't manage to flip them open to look at their contents.

Yes, I'll have to try again with Mr. Azik's copper whistle... Klein had experimented with it previously. When he enveloped the Flaring Sun Charm or Azik's copper whistle with his spirit, both the items were able to make it through obstacles, as if becoming illusory items themselves.

The bottom-most layer of the safe was rather strange. There was only a black and white photo there. On the photo was a suave young man.

Madam Sharon's past lover? Were they forcefully broken apart, and Madam Sharon having no choice but to marry the old baron and, thus, embarked on her path of debauchery by entering the beds of multiple men? But deep in her heart, she still harbors a pure space. Every night, when it's quiet, she takes out this photo and strokes it with tears on her face... Klein instantly imagined the plot of a great romantic tragedy.

But the more he looked at it, the more something seemed amiss. The young man in the photo seemed, perhaps, a little too much like Madam Sharon...

*Madam Sharon's brother? She's a Beyonder... F**k, could she also be of the Demoness pathway? The same as Instigator Trissy!* Klein suddenly had a stroke of inspiration which scared himself.

Could the reason Trissy stayed in Tingen this long be because her partner was here? Klein observed the photo closely, realizing that the young man looked remarkably like Madam Sharon.

His nearly-transparent face grimaced in pain. He could no longer view that "porno" the same way as before!

Collecting himself, Klein felt for the corners of the safe to see if they hid anything.

Even though he couldn't pick up any papers in his current state, passing through objects was a different feeling from passing through the air. The feeling was also different when passing through objects of different densities.

In his search, Klein suddenly froze.

He found an empty space on the side of the safe facing the wall —a hidden compartment!

After confirming that there was no danger, Klein made his way inside. What entered his field of vision were ointments, fragrances, powdered herbs, and other objects. The centerpiece was a statue of a god that took the form of a skeleton.

The statue was about the size of a palm, and probably of a beautiful girl. It had long hair all the way to its heels, each strand of hair was thick and clear, like a venomous snake.

Situated at the tip of every strand of hair was an eye—some closed, others open.

Klein was shocked. He caught a whiff of an evil scent and hurried out of the hidden compartment.

He now understood why his divination for any secret rooms or partitions in the room had failed!

Klein rushed out of the heavy safe in retreat. Only when he realized that everything seemed fine did he calm down.

That white bone statue is creepy... Although it isn't dangerous, it gives me the creeps... Could it be the so-called Primordial Demoness? An evil god like the Hidden Sage, the Dark Side of the Universe, or the True Creator? Klein recalled his hunches about Madam Sharon, and he suddenly understood what existence the white bone statue might represent.

Just as he thought, his spirituality stirred as an ominous premonition gripped him.

Klein quickly flew next to the window with complicated patterns and looked at the road outside. He saw a carriage driving towards the front gate under the light of the gas street lamps.

Madam Sharon is back? There was a tug at his heartstrings as he finally understood the source of his ominous premonition.

Taking into consideration that Trissy only became a woman after Sequence 8 Instigator, so she's most likely a Sequence 7. And since Madam Sharon has been active in Tingen's social circles for many years, she was most likely much stronger than Trissy. Hence, Klein didn't dare to take the risk of relying on his Flaring Sun Charm and Azik's copper whistle. Instead, he made the wise decision to leave.

He had a limited number of charms. Plus, he didn't know when he would be able to get the Sealed Artifact, Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem, out again. Hence, if it wasn't a desperate situation, Klein didn't want to waste his most powerful charms. He would also have the issue of explaining himself if he were to use it.

I can't just tell Dunn that a kind expert had happened to pass by and helped me, right?

As for why he didn't want to use Azik's copper whistle, it was because Klein wasn't sure if the messenger, that was summoned, had the ability to fight. What if it just looked strong but only knew how to send letters?

With what I discovered earlier, it should be sufficient for the Nighthawks team to take action. Why should I fight against Madam Sharon alone? We can totally gank her! Klein emphasized inwardly and ended his summoning. With a whoosh, he returned to the world above the gray fog. He then quickly wrapped himself in spirituality and stimulated a rapid descent to return to his body in reality.

He quickly put out the flame and put away the candle. He removed the wall of spirituality and left Madam Sharon's bedroom. He took the same path back, but he didn't have the time to reset the bolt on the balcony door.

Sliding down the water pipe, Klein climbed over the wall which was opposite the entrance of the house. He remained hidden until he reached the neighboring street. Then, he hired the expensive night carriage to Zouteland Street.

...

Madam Sharon, who looked beautiful in her black dress, slowly walked to the second floor. She dismissed her maidservants and opened the door to her bedroom.

Her pure clear eyes suddenly concentrated and reflected fine threads that were almost transparent and unnoticeable. They didn't possess the luster of spirituality; they were like human hair that was pathologically changed. If one didn't already know of their existence or have a pair of very special eyes, they wouldn't notice the strands.

All those fine threads had torn and fallen to the ground.

Madam Sharon squinted her eyes and directed her focus onto the thick gray metal safe.

...

36 Zouteland Street, the Blackthorn Security Company.

Dunn was reading the newspaper casually with his legs crossed. He looked at Klein who appeared before his office door with a strange expression. He sighed and said, “Weren’t you supposed to slip into Madam Sharon’s house to do an initial search? ...Did you encounter some sort of problem?”

Klein nodded seriously and said, “Yes, I suspect that Madam Sharon is a member of the Demoness Sect.”

“A member of the Demoness Sect?” Dunn lowered the newspaper and ruminated over the words. He then asked seriously, “What did you discover?”

Klein didn’t sit down, he leaned his body forward and supported his weight with his hands holding the edge of the work desk. “First, I found a photo. There was a young man in the photo, but he looked very much like Madam Sharon.”

If he were to change into female clothing, put on makeup, and Photoshop the picture a little, he would look exactly like Madam Sharon... Klein held back his urge to lampoon.

“Similar to Instigator Trissy?” Dunn’s eyes sparkled as he was enlightened.

They had previously predicted that Trissy was most likely a member of the Demoness Sect.

“Yes.” Klein nodded with mixed emotions as he continued, “I used divination to discover that Madam Sharon has a white bone statue in a hidden compartment in her safe. It’s of an extremely beautiful woman, but her hair is very long, to her ankles. Every single strand is as thick as a venomous snake. On the tips, there were eyes. They looked rather creepy. Captain, is that the image of the Primordial Demoness?”

As his security clearance was insufficient, the information about the Demoness Sect that he could read was very limited.

Dunn recalled and nodded with a serious expression and said, “That’s the image of the Primordial Demoness.

We have to take action immediately and seize control of Madam Sharon.”

Klein immediately agreed and said, “If Madam Sharon is a MidSequence Beyonder from the Demoness Sect, I have to assume that she’ll be able to tell that someone had sneaked into her bedroom.”

Then, he suddenly felt puzzled as he blurted, “Captain, why do the seven orthodox gods only have symbols without any actual image, while the evil gods that I’m currently aware of have anthropomorphic appearances? The True Creator and the Primordial Demoness are examples. Is this one of the differences between orthodox gods and evil gods?”

Why would there be such a difference? Klein added inwardly, but he wisely didn’t say it out.

“That’s one of the differences between orthodox gods and evil gods.” Dunn gave a reassuring answer.

Then, he got up and walked towards the clothes rack. He said, “Let’s not delay any further, I’m worried that Madam Sharon will run away.” Then, Dunn paused.

“Go upstairs to get Kenley. With the three of us taking action together, we can apply for one Sealed Artifact. Madam Sharon is very likely higher than a Sequence 7 Beyonder.”

Captain, you’re so wise! Klein answered without hesitation, “Alright.”

Then, he asked curiously, “Captain, which Sealed Artifact are you going to use?”

Dunn weighed his words before he answered, “3-0217.”

As there weren't many Sealed Artifacts behind Tingen City's Chanis Gate, Klein quickly remembered what Captain wanted to use.

"Number: 0217.

"Name: Spirit Medium's Mirror.

"Danger Grade: 3. Considerably dangerous. It has to be used carefully. It can only be requested for operations that require three or more people.

"Security classification: Official Nighthawks member or above.

"Sealing Method: Store in absolute darkness.

"Description: The back of the mirror is plated in mercury, the front of the mirror has three minor cracks.

"The very first investigator that looked into the mirror saw a sobbing girl with long hair. Then, he discovered the girl climbing out of the mirror.

"From many experiments with the artifact, the image that's reflected in the mirror is different most of the time. Even if the same person uses it repeatedly, they would encounter different things of varying danger levels. But they would prioritize dealing with the person who looked at the mirror first.

"The most dangerous situation is to see oneself in the mirror.

"If no one looks at the mirror, under the prerequisite of there being light, an image would surface automatically every three hours.

"It doesn't possess any living traits.

"Remark: The mirror originally belonged to a Spirit Medium and was a very ordinary mirror until one day the Spirit Medium committed suicide when looking into it."

Indeed, that there aren't many Sealed Artifacts behind Chanis Gate that can be used in a Beyonder battle. 3-0217 is a good choice... Klein didn't speak further as he immediately ran to the Nighthawks' recreation room to get Sleepless Kenley.

That night was Royale's turn to be on duty at Chanis Gate. Leonard was off duty, Seeka Tron was patrolling areas like Raphael Cemetery, and the new member would only arrive on Sunday. Hence, Dunn could only pick from Frye and Kenley. Taking into consideration that Madam Sharon was from the Demoness Sect and had little to do with dead spirits, he had opted for the latter.

After a few minutes, Dunn returned from the basement. He held the mirror that was tightly wrapped in a thick black cloth.

Frankly speaking, if I didn't know beforehand, I wouldn't be able to tell that it's a mirror. None of it is exposed... Klein went forward with the petite-sized Kenley.

"You're in charge of using Sealed Artifact 3-0217." Dunn passed the mirror to Kenley.

Upon seeing that, Klein suddenly realized that he was a Sequence 8 Beyonder and that he possessed the ability to fight head on. He couldn't just hide by the side as support.

Man, I'm a little nervous... He touched the Slumber Charms in his pockets and made sure that he was well prepared.

The only problem is that in order to make it easier to climb, I'm not bringing my cane. Hmm, I can borrow Kenley's. He has the mirror in one hand and a gun in the other; that should be sufficient. Amidst Klein's thoughts, the trio arrived downstairs and took a carriage to Osna Street.

On their way there, Kenley looked at the Sealed Artifact 3-0217 in his hands. He sighed from the tension.

"This is the first time I've been involved in such a dangerous operation."

Normally, the Nighthawks wouldn't use any Sealed Artifacts to deal with Beyonder incidents.

When they went to Morse Town, they had applied for the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem for preventive purposes. Given how far away Morse Town was, it would've taken backup some time to arrive if they needed it. This time, they were almost certain that their target was a Mid-Sequence Beyonder!

"Don't worry, perhaps Madam Sharon has already fled," Klein replied with a smile.

Honestly, he was just as tense as Kenley.

Dunn's eyes turned and looked at him helplessly.

"Let's try not to let Madam Sharon escape."

...

About twenty minutes later, the three Nighthawks arrived at Osna Street. They saw the garden and Madam Sharon's house in the darkness. The house lay in silence as though nothing had happened.

Klein took out the pendulum in his left sleeve and made a quick divination.

"There's danger inside. "There's danger inside."

...

After he recited the statement seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the topaz pendant spinning clockwise. The amplitude and speed were considered medium-level.

It meant that there was danger in there. Not very high, but it wasn't very low either!

There's danger in there. Not very high, but it isn't very low either...

This means that Madam Sharon is still in the building. She hasn't fled yet...

Klein froze for a moment, quickly realizing the reason.

He had entered a unique state by summoning himself to inspect the safe. He hadn't forcefully broken the lock when he was inspecting the secret compartment, nor did he activate any hidden traps. Thus, Madam Sharon wouldn't have discovered that her secret had been exposed. She would only think that there was a break in, or some private investigator was checking on her to no avail.

In such a situation, it was logical that she would continue to stay home. It made logical sense.

To lose composure from a tiny matter and overreact wasn't the Madam Sharon whom Klein had come to understand. She was a calm socialite who was capable of acting afraid and pitiful, as well as a Beyonder member of the Demoness Sect who had kept her identity hidden for many years.

If the telephone had been invented, Madam Sharon definitely would've called one of her lovers and complained about the security in Tingen City whilst hinting that it was Madam Maynard... Klein began imagining a melodramatic plot. He told Dunn and Kenley the results of his divination as well as his guess.

"That's the most reasonable deduction." Dunn pressed down on his hat as he looked at the second floor of Madam Sharon's apartment. "There's no need for us to rush in."

"Why?" Kenley, who was holding Sealed Artifact 3-0217, instinctively asked.

He was filled with fear towards the Spirit Medium Mirror in his hands. He was afraid that some unexpected event would arise from the Sealed Artifact.

Dunn wore his black gloves and looked at Klein.

"Do you still remember what happened when we tried to capture Instigator Trissy?"

"I remember," Klein replied after some thought. "She seemed to be able to detect our presence and make the necessary responses, which resulted in her successful escape."

I also remember suggesting the use of bombarding the house when the Captain asked me how I would deal with the situation. That was the safest, most surefire method. But not this time... We can't use it here as there are many innocent maids in Madam Sharon's house. If we notified them in advance and got them to evacuate, that would definitely catch Madam Sharon's attention. According to Leonard, Trissy could turn invisible. We have to assume that Madam Sharon has that ability too... Klein connected the dots at once.

Dunn looked at the crimson moon in the sky and said, "Good, your answer is very good. You're rather intuitive in such situations.

"We cannot approach recklessly and end up alarming Madam Sharon. I'll try dragging her into a dream from a distance. If I'm successful, you and Kenley will go and capture her... Well... You can make the decision of whether to kill her or not. Kill her if you cannot control her. Your safety is of utmost importance."

Captain, your line of thought is always so clear at such critical moments! I was just waiting for you to say that! Klein praised in his heart.

Over the months, Klein had grasped most of the unique traits of the different Beyonder powers of his partners when he was casually chatting with Dunn, Leonard, Frye, and the rest. Amongst those, Dunn Smith, who was a Nightmare, could freely enter the dreams of a sleeping person even though he was at home or at the Blackthorn Security Company.

But how he did it was a secret of his own Sequence, and Klein didn't ask about it too deeply.

The ability to drag someone into a dream had a limited range and was normally used during direct confrontations.

But Klein had once heard the Captain say that the ability also had a certain effect when used within a hundred meter radius. But he needed time to complete the process. He couldn't do it instantly, for the process was similar to coaxing a child to sleep.

At this moment, Dunn was going to drag the distant Madam Sharon into a sleeping state, a little at a time. After completing the first stages of the restraint, he was going to create the most opportunistic conditions for Klein and Kenley.

"Alright." Kenley was also rather accepting of the Captain's plan.

Without any more chatter, Dunn leaned on the corner of a wall and shut his eyes. He put his hands together and lowered his head. His black trench coat and silk hat blended into the night.

...

In the opulent bedroom.

Madam Sharon was leaning on her comfortable rocking chair, completely naked. Her fair and excellent figure was completely exposed.

She sometimes turned her head towards the full-length mirror to admire her charming self.

As she looked, her face would flush red as tears welled in her eyes. Her expression emitted a strange tenderness amidst her stupor.

The skeletal statue of the goddess was sitting on the table beside her. The thick strands of hair seemed gentle under the warm, pink light.

Slowly, the frequency in which Madam Sharon looked into the mirror decreased. Bit by bit, her eyelids couldn't help but droop.

...

Seconds turned into minutes when Klein suddenly recalled something. *How was the Captain going to notify Kenley and himself after he successfully dragged Madam Sharon into a dream?*

Madam Sharon would wake up if the Captain left his Nightmare state, and she would notice that something was off... I wonder if the Captain is capable of giving hand signs while dreaming at the same time? Klein looked at the worried Kenley pacing around and intended to discuss this with him in order to distract him.

At that moment, his mind turned into a blur. He saw a giant crimson moon, as well as Captain Dunn Smith in his black trench coat under the moon. There was also the short Kenley, his expression dazed.

Klein realized that he too was dreaming!

I've been dragged into a dream by the Captain... So that's how he was going to notify us. He wanted to facepalm himself, but could only maintain his trance-like state while saying muddleheadedly, "Captain?"

Dunn nodded slightly and said, "Madam Sharon has entered a dream. You can take action now."

He then emphasized, "Remember to be careful, and don't be too reckless... We would rather miss the opportunity than take unwarranted risks."

Just as he finished his sentence, the world before Klein shattered. His eyes reflected Dunn Smith again. He was still at the corner of the wall, looking down with his hands clenched tightly into fists.

On the other side, Kenley, who had stopped pacing about, also opened his eyes.

The duo exchanged looks and nodded. Both of them entered a state to execute their operation.

Even though this was the first time Kenley was participating in a relatively dangerous mission, he was still more experienced than Klein. He had attended many official missions, so he quickly adjusted his mental state, becoming calm and sharp.

Of course, this could also be attributed to the augmentation the night had on a Sleepless. This was also one of the reasons Dunn had chosen Kenley over Frye for this operation.

"Let's go." As a Sequence 8, Klein took on the role of the leader, signaling for his partner to follow.

Kenley didn't object. He gripped the tightly-wrapped mirror and softened his footsteps as he followed.

Klein led him to the place where he scaled the wall previously. He grabbed onto the crevices of the wall and made it to the top of the wall with little effort.

He maintained his ridiculous sense of balance and turned around, bending down and grabbing the Spirit Medium Mirror Kenley had tossed over.

The moment he touched the mirror, Klein felt his spiritual perception tighten suddenly. It was as if what was covered by the black cloth wasn't a mirror, but a door to some unknown, dangerous alternate world.

Indeed, any item that requires sealing has some malefic side to it... Klein internally muttered to himself wistfully as he watched Kenley scale the wall.

In order to facilitate movement, Kenley had placed his cane beside Dunn. Klein didn't dwell on that matter.

After making their way through the garden to the side of the building, he climbed the pipe up to the balcony of the second floor, just as he did before.

He then hung naturally from his feet, allowing his body to fall, once again taking Sealed Artifact 3-0271.

Kenley looked at him, puzzled. But immediately, he nodded his head in enlightenment.

At that moment, Klein was shocked by his own actions. He exerted a force using his waist, and, with the support of his left hand, he easily flipped over.

What happened just now? Why did I move like that? It felt so natural... Is that an ability of the Clown? He thought back and felt that he was able to better display the unique characteristics of a Clown in actual practice.

After waiting for Kenley to easily make his way up, Klein handed the Spirit Medium Mirror back to him before pulling open the unlocked door of the balcony.

Kenley carefully pulled away the black cloth wrapped around Sealed Artifact 3-0271. He pointed the object mirror side down, reflecting the tiles on the ground.

One of the rules of the Spirit Medium Mirror was not to use it on yourself or your partners!

After putting away the black cloth, Kenley took out his revolver and followed behind Klein. They made their way past the corridor towards Madam Sharon's bedroom, their footsteps light.

Klein wielded his readied revolver, and, while activating his Spirit Vision, he reached out for the door handle with his left hand.

He didn't dare to be careless since his divination told him that there would be danger present.

The reason why he didn't make another quick divination was that he knew the presence of the Primordial Demoness's statue in the room. At this distance, his divination would definitely be interrupted. He knew that there was no way for him to get a clear answer without relying on the gray

fog's obstruction. Furthermore, with Kenley beside him, there was no way for him to enter that mysterious space.

After pushing open the door, what entered Klein and Kenley's field of vision was the warm light from the gas lamp.

Then, they saw Madam Sharon slumped over her chair, as well as her alluring body.

However, Madam Sharon wasn't asleep. She was reclined in her chair with a faint smile across her mouth, looking straight at her two visitors.

Instinctively, Kenley flipped his palm and pointed the Spirit Medium Mirror at Madam Sharon.

Klein first froze, then exclaimed, "No!"

He clearly remembered that there was a full-length mirror on the other side of the chair. But it wasn't there now!

The Spirit Medium Mirror had locked onto Madam Sharon in just a second.

But that image of Madam Sharon became blurry before turning into a full-length mirror.

Kenley looked at himself in the mirror and also Sealed Artifact 3-0271 reflecting his own image.

A figure instantly appeared within the Spirit Medium Mirror. It was an expressionless, sinister image of Kenley himself!

Klein felt his limbs turn rigid as if he had been entangled by invisible threads.

An elegant figure appeared beside the full-length mirror. It was Madam Sharon, wearing a nightgown.

She glanced at the two intruders and chuckled.

"If it wasn't for the fact that the statue happened to be beside me, I should be deep asleep now, waiting for you to wake me up with a kiss."

At that moment, Klein suddenly shouted a simple term in ancient Hermes, "Crimson!"

He had no idea when he dug his left palm into his pocket. He deftly flicked his fingers and tossed out a Slumber Charm.

The silver charm suddenly turned ice-cold, just like a crystal coat with layers of frost.

Klein shivered and suddenly became more alert, his fear and agitation temporarily froze.

He quickly injected his spirituality into the charm and pushed the thin silver piece out of his pocket with his fingertip, causing it to drop to his feet.

A crimson flame appeared in the air, and the sound of light, continuous explosions echoed in the room.

A serene and deep feeling instantly emanated and engulfed most of the bedroom, including Madam Sharon, Sleepless Kenley, and also Klein himself!

The Slumber Charm was an item that didn't distinguish between the enemy and the caster. In most situations, using it meant throwing it at the enemy.

That way, the caster would only be affected by the remnant shock waves, but not to the extent of failing to resist the temptation of falling into a deep sleep.

But Klein's arms were entangled by countless invisible threads. He couldn't throw the charm, so he could only exchange Madam Sharon's slumber with his!

But he had long considered such a situation and was prepared. This was because his body was unique—a uniqueness that was unlike most Low-Sequence Beyonders.

In that instant, Klein's eyelids closed and entered into deep sleep normally, while Madam Sharon and Kenley also appeared to slow down.

Klein quickly realized that he was in a dream and rationally knew that he was sleeping.

Whenever anything related to dream invasions or similar hypnotic effects were used on him, he could still maintain consciousness!

He had discovered this when he was dealing with Dunn's Nightmare powers, as well as when Daly was channeling his spirit!

Kacha!

Klein tore out of the dream forcefully and woke up. He felt the countless threads binding his arms, legs, and body loosen. As for Madam Sharon, she had a vacant look, as though she was going to shake off the effect of the Slumber Charm but had yet to wake up entirely. Kenley was on the ground with the Spirit Medium Mirror flipped upside down nearby, while his revolver had been flung to the door.

An opportunity!

Klein seized the moment while the fine threads loosened, he took out his left hand and snapped his fingers. He lit up a faint blue spiritual flame and burned the countless fine threads before him.

At the same time, he picked up his revolver with his right hand and pulled the trigger repeatedly.

Bang! Bang!

The two silver demon hunting bullets tore through the barrel and fired towards Madam Sharon.

Klein didn't confirm the outcome but bent his knees, exerted strength in his waist, and leaped over to Kenley. Simultaneously, he broke the fine strings that were tied around his body.

His earlier shots were mainly to inform the Captain that something unexpected had happened inside. They were already fighting and were in need of assistance. Of course, if he could shoot Madam Sharon directly, that'd be the best outcome!

However, Klein didn't believe a Sequence 7 or 6 Beyonder could be taken care of so easily.

There were faint blue flames twirling in the air, dancing across the fines threads in the room. In such a dreamy scenery, the two silver demon hunting bullets struck Madam Sharon's body.

Kacha! Kacha!

Madam Sharon was in her translucent sleeping robe, and her indistinct body shattered like the crimson moon's reflection in a lake. The full body mirror next to her cracked into pieces, and most of them shattered into about thumbnail-sized chunks while a small amount remained on the frame. They all resembled palms, strangely-shaped palms.

A substitute? A Beyonder power of the Demoness Sequence? The corner of Klein's eyes swept over it as he already rolled next to Kenley. Since the fine strings were all broken by his movement, the faint blue flames didn't spread over.

At that moment, Madam Sharon had vanished, but the

"sleeping" Kenley lifted his hands and gripped his neck so tightly that his saliva began flowing out as his tongue protruded. But he didn't seem like he was going to stop.

But in Klein's Spirit Vision, there weren't any abnormal things around!

He suddenly recalled the description of Sealed Artifact 3-0271.

The most dangerous situation is when you see yourself!

Could it be that Kenley saw his own reflection in Sealed Artifact 3-0271 through the full body mirror? Klein speculated. He quickly took out another silver charm without having the luxury of time to think about it.

It was a triangular-shaped item: a Requiem Charm.

"Crimson!"

Klein said the ancient Hermes word while he instilled his spirituality into the charm and threw it out.

Then, he pressed down his left hand and grabbed the Spirit Medium Mirror.

He used the corner of his eye to determine that the Sealed Artifact was facing downward so it wouldn't reflect himself.

The triangular silver charm ignited into icy-blue flames. The gentle and serene darkness blanketed Kenley and affected Klein himself.

The nervous emotions dispersed in that instant. Kenley relaxed his hands on his throat, while Klein felt like he was standing before his oriel window at home, overlooking the quiet streets. His physical and mental state was at peace.

That was exactly what Klein wanted!

At that very moment, he entered an extremely serene state. He appeared to be the only person left in the entire world with nothing else in existence.

Within this sense of calmness, he suddenly had a gut feeling in his mind.

Madam Sharon is about to attack my right waist!

That was the foresight ability of a Clown in battle. Without any hesitation, Klein lifted the Spirit Medium Mirror and rolled to his left.

Just as he moved, a dagger, burning in dark flames, pierced the spot where he had stood earlier.

Madam Sharon's figure was outlined once again.

As he rolled, Klein suddenly lifted the Spirit Medium Mirror and pointed it at Madam Sharon!

Besides saving his teammate, his main goal when he got close to Kenley was to pick up the Sealed Artifact.

Otherwise, he didn't believe that anything good would come out of waiting for the Captain's reinforcements while being next to Madam Sharon. The Flaring Sun Charm could be used to fight against a Beyonder, but the effect wouldn't be as significant as if it was used against a dead spirit. Plus, the other person wouldn't just stand there and wait for him to use a charm.

If it really didn't work, Klein could only take the risk and use Azik's copper whistle.

Regarding how he would explain it, he would think about it after he managed to stay alive!

However, things developed better than Klein had predicted. Madam Sharon opted for assassination. She didn't interrupt his use of the Requiem Charm and the Spirit Medium Mirror.

Therefore, Klein had instantly formulated a simple plan. He didn't avoid the repercussions of the Requiem Charm but relied on it to enhance his foresight ability as a Clown. Then, he seized the opportunity to dodge the attack while he used the Spirit Medium Mirror to reflect the enemy!

When Madam Sharon missed her strike, she immediately wanted to chase after her agile opponent who was rolling away.

She suddenly saw a mirror with three cracks.

The surface of the mirror rippled, and a woman's figure appeared. Her hair was black and thick, hanging low and blocking her face.

Klein's left hand shook, and the Spirit Medium Mirror glided on the carpet for a dozen centimeters with the front facing upwards.

A pale hand extended out of the mirror, and a woman in a white bedsheet-like dress climbed out of the mirror quickly and pounced at Madam Sharon.

Madam Sharon's expression became gloomy, there was a layer of darkness above her innocent brown eyes.

Her surroundings ignited with seven black flames.

With a swoosh, a black flame flew out and hit the woman in the white dress.

Whoosh!

The woman caught on fire and wailed in pain. Very soon, she vanished into thin air.

Sou! Sou! Sou!

The black flames flew at Klein one after another like bullets.

Klein's pupils constricted as he quickly rolled away. He didn't dare stay in that spot.

However, his action of rolling gradually became slower because there seemed to be fine threads entangling him again. They slowed him down and affected his motion.

It seemed like the nemesis of the Clown's combat abilities!

The black flames flew past Klein's face and fell onto Madam Sharon's bed. However, it didn't burn, seemingly effective on items with life or spirituality.

Klein had yet to feel rejoice over his successful dodge when another premonition flashed through his head.

He twisted his spine and changed his forward flip into a side roll.

A transparent ice crystal suddenly appeared like a spear and stabbed into the carpet where Klein had originally intended to land.

The white frost expanded and struck Klein whose actions were affected by the fine threads.

He suddenly shivered, and his body became stiff. Although he could still move, he was much slower.

Madam Sharon had black flames surrounding her again, and there was a transparent ice spear that condensed in her hands. Klein didn't hesitate any further as he shoved his hand into his pocket and grabbed Azik's copper whistle.

He, he, he.

Just then, Kenley shook off the effect of the Requiem and Slumber charms. He got up and looked towards Madam Sharon with a pair of vacant-looking eyes.

His face seemed to be blanketed by a shadow, making him look silent yet creepy.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Kenley leaped at Madam Sharon who was the closest.

Madam Sharon narrowed her eyes and shot the black flames surrounding her one after another at Kenley.

Poof! Poof Poof! The black flames disappeared like snowflakes and didn't have any effect.

Klein was stunned at first, then he lifted the gun in his right hand and pulled the trigger while aiming at Madam Sharon.

Bang!

Madam Sharon dodged ahead of time and threw the frost spear towards Kenley, but it only penetrated his clothes and not his skin. Hence, it didn't create a freezing effect.

Bang! Klein fired again, and Madam Sharon dodged to the side of the broken full-body mirror and picked up a palm-sized fragment.

She continued to walk swiftly and dodged another bullet. She then used the irregular fragment to reflect Kenley as he leaped over at her.

Right on the heels of that, Madam Sharon dodged to the side as she swiped the mirror with her palm which was covered in black flames.

At that moment, Klein had emptied his revolver. He had no choice but to throw it, letting the empty shells and revolver fall to the carpet.

Just as he rolled over to pick up Kenley's revolver, he heard his teammate's tragic scream.

Kenley stopped before bending over and vomiting. It was bile at first, then a red heart, followed by his lungs and stomach that were burning with black flames.

The beating heart, the yellowish-green liquid, the silently burning black flames, and the falling figure entered Klein's field of vision and etched themselves deeply into Klein's mind.

The most dangerous mission he had encountered up to this date had been when he was dealing with Ray Bieber who was in the midst of digesting. Even such a terrifying and dangerous monster had only resulted in severe injuries to the Beyonders on the mission. No one had to sacrifice their lives.

The deaths of the Beyonders Klein had witnessed, including Old Neil's, were all due to them losing control. The "murderer" might be strange and indescribable or related to evil gods, but they had nothing to do with the missions they undertook.

Now, he was looking at one of his partners being killed in action. The death was purely due to one mistake.

Nighthawks were fighting against madness, but so were they also fighting against danger.

There might never be an opportunity to make up for that one mistake.

Klein's thoughts erupted with a boom.

Apparently having taken a huge blow, he knelt down and lifted his right hand, firing successive shots at Madam Sharon. The silver demon hunting bullets pierced through the invisible threads and shot towards her head and transparent sleeping gown.

Suddenly, Madam Sharon appeared to be yanked in another direction by something, allowing her to successfully avoid Klein's manic shooting.

Klein only managed to collect himself and regain the ability of rational thought when he finished firing the five bullets in his revolver, and the sound of the hammer striking an empty chamber entered his ears.

His heart tightened. Without any time to reload, he tossed the revolver to the side and took out a stack of tarot cards!

Pa!

Madam Sharon's body moved to the side and saw a card fly past her, piercing deeply into the surface of the makeup table.

She smiled, her beautiful brown eyes once again taking on a black luster.

At that moment, her waterfall like brown hair suddenly flailed into the air like it was lifted by an invisible force.

Madam Sharon froze. She wanted to dodge, but she was too slow. Klein had tossed out a "Magician" card, successfully pinning her hair to the wall.

Pa! Madam Sharon forcefully tore away her hair and rolled forward, her body quickly vanishing from Klein's line of sight.

She's turned invisible again... Klein had a tarot card between his fingers as he slowly turned around while being alert of his surroundings.

Suddenly, he realized why Madam Sharon had to give up her attack, and why she had slowed down.

If the situation had developed normally, Klein would have had no choice but to use Azik's copper whistle to deal with this terrifying demoness!

Yes! The Captain must be around here somewhere! He felt a little excited. He looked around, his gaze instinctively falling on the window.

At the same time, he made a judgment in his heart.

Madam Sharon wants to flee!

She knows that we still have a partner with the ability to drag her into a dream, but she is unsure if there would be other reinforcements from the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind!

Even though she's powerful, there's no way that she can wipe out a team of Beyonders on her own!

With that thought, Klein flicked his wrist, tossing the tarot card towards the window.

Whoosh Whoosh Whoosh! He threw out five cards in succession, three sealing the window and the other two towards the door.

Crack! Thud! Thud!

Amidst the sound of shattering glass, two tarot cards dug into the ajar bedroom door, one after the other. As he expected, Klein heard the sound of dodging.

He once again tossed cards out, making use of his Clown's intuition to pinpoint where he should be aiming.

The cards pierced through the air and rapidly advanced before drilling themselves into the sturdy wall. However, a figure was quickly outlined in the air. It was none other than the brownhaired Madam Sharon who was in a translucent sleeping gown.

The moment Madam Sharon was exposed, her eyes lost their focus, as though she was falling asleep standing.

Captain... Klein scanned his surroundings but was in no hurry to throw his cards. This was because he knew that Madam Sharon would quickly break out of the dream. He had to deal fatal damage in these two or three seconds, or their opponent would escape.

It was easy to escape from a Nightmare when there was a huge distance between them!

Bending his knees, Klein rolled forward diagonally. He went prone and extended his right hand, grabbing the edge of the Spirit Medium Mirror that was facing upward.

He then flicked his wrist before his reflection could appear in the mirror. He tossed Sealed Artifact 3-0271 towards Madam Sharon, mirror side facing her.

Madam Sharon's body trembled. The color of her brown eyes was quickly restored as they once again found their focus.

And awakening before her was a crystalline layer of sturdy frost that appeared on the surface of her body.

However, she didn't see the card, nor the demon hunting bullet approaching her. All she saw was a mirror, and that the mirror was reflecting her innocent, yet alluring beauty.

That beautiful face in the mirror suddenly became contorted. Wrinkles, gashes of blood, and rotting spots appeared on her face.

"No!" Madam Sharon let out a shrill cry as if she had just witnessed someone she loved die.

Her skin quickly took on a green color as yellow pus flowed out the corner of her eyes.

After a moment of suffering, a silent black flame burned outward from within Madam Sharon, as if she was trying to expel something.

The black flames then condensed into a thick frost, as if it was creating a coffin for an eternal rest.

The invisible threads finally took on a color that was visible to the human eye. They enveloped the frost, forming a gigantic cocoon.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Sealed Artifact 3-0271 fell onto the ground and tumbled before stopping beside Madam Sharon's giant cocoon.

At that moment, Dunn broke through the window frame and somersaulted into the room.

He caught sight of Kenley, who had stopped breathing, and his expression sank.

It was at this moment, the cocoon cracked open. The coffin of ice crumbled an inch at a time as black flames turned into specks of light, dissipating into the surroundings.

Madam Sharon's skin had regained its normal color. Her eyes showed fatigue, but she seemed normal.

Her eyes reflected Klein who was still sprawled on the ground. She also saw Dunn Smith, his finger pressed on his glabella with his eyes closed.

A formless ripple spread outward from Dunn as Madam Sharon's eyelids drooped uncontrollably. Under Dunn's trench coat were writhing, snake-like objects.

Klein knew that the Captain couldn't restrain Madam Sharon for long, just like when they were previously fighting Monster Bieber. Klein rolled forward again, grabbed his revolver, the one he had previously tossed onto the carpet.

He grabbed three demon hunting bullets with his left hand and familiarity stuffed them into the round chambers.

Pa!

Klein closed the cylinder and stood up, taking aim at Madam Sharon with both hands on the gun. He aimed at the center of her forehead.

Bang!

He controlled his body with the abilities of the Clown and pulled the trigger.

The silver demon hunting bullet pierced through the air, accurately hitting the fixed target.

A bloody gash appeared between Madam Sharon's eyes, but the bullet seemed to tear through multiple layers of obstruction, causing it to lose the bulk of its power, rendering it unable to pierce through the target's skull.

Klein fired another two shots without hesitation when he saw Madam Sharon suddenly open her eyes.

Bang! Bang!

A rain of blood splattered amidst white dots. The stunning beauty that was Madam Sharon had become a mutilated corpse that would incite nightmares in every man.

She had long run out of "substitutes" to use.

Phew. Phew. Klein lowered his arms and panted heavily. Madam Sharon, with only half her head left, slumped onto the ground. She still had an exceptional figure, her skin still white and tender.

Dunn straightened himself up and opened his eyes. He, too, lowered his hand from his glabella, his face a little pale. He wasn't injured, but he looked as though he had lost a lot of blood.

"If it wasn't for the fact that she wanted to kill a few people before she tried to escape; if it wasn't for Sealed Artifact 3-0271 reflecting herself by chance, we probably would've only been able to injure her..." Dunn slowly walked forward to Klein's side, his voice unusually low.

If it wasn't for how unique I was, I would've died along with Kenley in the first ten seconds of the battle... Klein turned to look at Kenley who was silently lying on the black ash. He exhaled.

"Captain, Kenley..."

"I know..." Dunn replied with a raspy voice. "I made a mistake. I was fooled by Madam Sharon. I didn't expect her to secretly escape from the dream."

He paused, then he said in a serious tone, “But you have to get used to this. It’s normal for Nighthawks to die during missions. Perhaps the next one to die would be me.”

Klein fell silent, not knowing how to reply. Kenley still had his eyes open, staring blankly at the ceiling.

“May the Goddess bless you. May you find true peace.” Dunn walked over to Kenley’s side and drew a crimson moon on his chest.

He then squatted and closed his partner’s eyes.

May the Goddess bless you. May the serene night no longer harbor any danger or madness... Klein also drew the crimson moon as he prayed silently in his heart.

A few seconds later, he forcefully retracted his gaze and asked in a heavy voice, “Captain, should I channel her spirit now?” Dunn nodded indiscernibly.

“Don’t attempt to ask about the Primordial Demoness. That’s very dangerous. I’ll guard you and prevent any accidents from disturbing you.”

Klein didn’t tarry. He took out the various ingredients and quickly set up an altar, starting the mediumship ritual.

After reciting the incantations, he took a step back and used a Dream Divination.

“Madam Sharon’s partners-in-crime. “Madam Sharon’s partners-in-crime.”

...

After reciting the statement seven times, Klein entered a dream. He saw Madam Sharon’s soul within the hazy world.

He reached out to the transparent, ethereal soul, and the scene before his eyes changed.

It was a night scene. Madam Sharon, who was wearing a long black robe, handed an ancient bronze book over to Instigator Trissy. She laughed a little manically after hearing the latter’s doubt over the term “Witch.”

“Weren’t you always curious? Curious about why our upper echelons are all female...”

So it really was the Demoness Sect... Leonard’s guess accurately matches the truth; he really does have a huge secret... The corresponding Sequence 7 for Assassin and Instigator is Witch? What a trap... Klein thought to himself.

The scene immediately changed. Klein saw a vast hall with narrow windows all around the place, and a lady clad in a pure white robe.

Her back was facing Madam Sharon as she said with a smile, “We can reach sainthood as long as we advance towards the Primordial. We can attain power, attain salvation, and avoid the end of days.”

Madam Sharon lowered her head and asked curiously, “Why must we become women? Is it because the Primordial is a woman? Do women symbolize destruction and calamity?”

The lady whose back was facing Madam Sharon answered calmly, “No, men are the same, they are the synonym of war.

These are two similar pathways.”

Synonym of war... A similar Sequence as the Demoness Sequence pathway... Which one would it be? Klein watched the movie-like scene as he recalled the Sequence pathways that he knew of.

As he was only an official Nighthawk, there was still a lot of information that he couldn't access. He was still in the dark about the names of the Mid to High Sequences and their corresponding traits. He only knew about the few that he had learned of from the Eternal Blazing Sun, such as the Priest of Light and the Unshadowed; the God of Combat Sequence pathway that he found out from the young man, Sun, such as Dawn Paladin, Guardian, and Demon Hunter; as well as Spirit Guide and Gatekeeper which he found out from Daly and Dunn.

Hence, it was difficult for him to judge which Sequence pathway would be a synonym of war. He could only eliminate them one by one, such as the God of Combat Sequence pathway which seemed more like individual battles rather than war.

Klein thought about it and minimized the scope to five options.

First, was the Arbiter Sequence pathway which the Loen Kingdom's ruler, the Augustus family, and the Feynapotter Kingdom's Castiya family were in control of. But Klein felt that this option was the least likely because the Arbiter's corresponding Sequence 8 was Sheriff and Sequence 7 was Interrogator, which both seemed to be leaning towards trial and judgment but not towards war.

Second, was the Fourth Epoch Solomon Empire's pathway of the Black Emperor. Its Sequence 9's modern name was Lawyer, which was good at discovering and using the flaws and weaknesses of an opponent, while also possessing outstanding eloquence and logical thinking. That was the second lowest possible Sequence pathway. He suspected that the development of the Sequence would make use of rules and walked in the shadow of order. Of course, war was also considered as one of the shadows of order.

Third, was the Hunter Sequence pathway that was in the control of the Feysac Empire's rulers, the Einhorn family; the Intis Republic's former royal family, the Sauron family, and also the hidden organization that only appeared in the last two to three hundred years, the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Klein thought it was quite possible.

The Nighthawk's confidential information described Hunters as excellent trackers, outstanding trap masters, and superb hunters. The corresponding Sequence 8 was Provoker, while Sequence 7 was Pyromaniac. Both were partially associated with massacre and war.

Fourth was the ancient organization Blood Sanctify Sect that worshiped demons. They were in control of the Criminal Sequence pathway. From the sequence title itself, Klein felt that it had a high possibility.

Fifth was the Rose School of Thought that was known for bloody rituals. They had the Prisoner Sequence pathway, and the reason was the same as the one before.

Just as Klein was drowning in his own thoughts, the scene before him changed. Madam Sharon had just finished showering, and her wet hair hung low. There was a fresh yet seductive charm on her face.

I can't see the woman in the white robe that turned Madam

Sharon into a Demoness... It might be because my psychic ability is still lacking... Klein reined back his thoughts and redirected his attention to what was before his eyes.

Madam Sharon flipped her hair, and water droplets glided down her cheeks.

She looked towards the man who was waiting on the bed as she giggled and said, "Do you need me to take care of Maynard?"

The middle-aged man on the bed creased his eyebrows and shook his head. “Not unless you can guarantee that there won’t be any traces left behind. But that’s impossible; besides, what means do you have?”

Looking at the man before him, Klein was taken aback at first before suddenly feeling that it was within expectations.

The middle-aged man’s photo often appeared on the front page of the Tingen City Honest Paper and other newspapers. He was the current mayor that was looking to be re-elected, a member of Conservative Party.

Madam Sharon smiled but didn’t delve deeper into the topic. Her robe was halfway up her legs, and she walked gracefully to the side of the bed.

The scenery before him changed one after another until Klein saw many Members of Parliament, businessmen, and civil servants who appeared on the newspaper occasionally.

They would either discuss how to receive donations, bribe voters by going around the Campaign Act, or promise protection and solve problems. In the entire development, Madam Sharon acted as a broker.

This is actually a documentary, right... “Tour the Upper Circles of Tingen with Madam Sharon”... Well, but why are there so many bed scenes... Many nobles and Members of Parliament knew that Madam Sharon had many lovers, so why did they look like they couldn’t resist the temptation... Was this an ability of Madam Sharon’s Sequence? Klein watched thoughtfully as he speculated.

Through the divination earlier, he was certain that none of the guys in Tingen’s upper circles knew of Madam Sharon’s true identity, nor did they collude with her to murder Maynard.

In other words, Maynard’s death was Madam Sharon’s own decision? Why? She had no reason to take the risk.

Of course, from Madam Sharon’s perspective, she possessed the Beyonder power to interfere in divination, and she could also create a sudden death from sexual pleasure and make the death appear natural and accidental. Killing Maynard wasn’t something risky that would expose her identity, but she clearly lacks a motive. It doesn’t match the risk involved!

Could it be one of the requirements of her “acting?” But she could definitely find someone whose identity and status wasn’t as sensitive. Then, the case wouldn’t have fallen to the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind.

The most important point was that Madam Sharon should’ve been able to tell that Maynard’s wife hated her and was extremely indignant. That made it highly likely that someone would be sent to investigate her, so why didn’t she move those sensitive items like the white bone statue away? She could have buried it in the garden or something.

Was she so confident in the security of her safe and its hidden compartment?

Amidst his suspicion, Klein saw that Madam Sharon’s spirit had yet to disperse. He seized the opportunity to do another dream divination.

This time, his divination involved: “Madam Sharon’s true motive for killing John Maynard.”

After he recited it in silence, Klein entered a dream once again and saw a new scene.

Madam Sharon held a glass of red wine which resembled blood. In her loose sleeping gown, she was pacing back and forth in her room. Finally, she drank the rest of the wine in one gulp, as though she had decided on something.

The scene dispersed quickly, leaving Klein even more confused since Maynard’s death looked like Madam Sharon had volunteered to do it without anyone’s instigation.

“That’s weird...” Klein muttered to himself and used another few divination statements. But the answers were no different.

Seeing that Madam Sharon was growing transparent and illusory, signifying that she was going to disappear soon, Klein thought and made final contact with the dead spirit.

“Sequence potion formula of the Demoness pathway.

“Sequence potion formula of the Demoness pathway.”

...

Klein recited the new divination statement. With the aid of Cogitation, he got into his dream very quickly.

At first, he didn’t want to do the divination because he felt that the Demoness pathway only spread disaster and created pain. Even if he obtained a corresponding potion formula, he was unwilling to sell it to anyone and indirectly become a murderer.

Then, he recalled another matter from before. With his understanding of the Spectator potion, he had been able to suspect and verify that Daxter Guderian was a member of the Psychology Alchemists.

So, in order to better fight against the Demonesses in the future, he’d to learn more of the traits of their Sequence pathway.

Yes, after Hood Eugen’s death, Daxter Guderian has yet to contact me. I’m guessing the Psychology Alchemists sent some stronger members for an investigation, and he hasn’t dared to make any moves... As Klein’s thoughts flashed, he saw the dark hall again. He saw the woman in the holy white robe again.

Madam Sharon hung her head low, and she could only see the other woman’s legs, a pair of flawless legs.

Soon, she heard a melodious voice.

“Pleasure, that is the name of the Sequence 6 potion, the goal that you are about to advance to. If you succeed, you’ll be a Demoness of Pleasure.

“When pleasure is irresistible and impossible to break away from, it’s a form of agony. This is also a maxim that you have to live by.

“As long as you complete your advancement, besides the enhancement of your various abilities as a Witch, you’ll also become more beautiful, making you better at seduction and providing unforgettable pleasure to the same or opposite sex during love-making. You’ll be able to make strange threads like a spider and utilize them.”

Immediately following that, an ancient silver book appeared before Madam Sharon. After it was opened, there was the formula and ingredients placed separately.

“Main ingredients: A pair of Succubus eyes, an adult Black Widow Spider Silk Gland.

“Supplementary ingredients: 100 ml of purified water, 5 drops of Black Jimsonweed juice, the complete remnants of a Succubus’s hair, 10 grams of Feynapotter Fly Powder, and 5 grams of real Mummy ashes.”

The scene changed again. It was the same hall, the same long white robe, and the same woman with indistinguishable features. But now, the difference was that Madam Sharon had returned to her original state. She was now the young man in the picture from before.

A melodious female voice reverberated in his ears.

“This is the name of the Sequence 7 potion, I’m sure you’re surprised.”

“Yes, I still can’t believe it’s called Witch!” “Madam Sharon” said in a rather agitated manner.

“Remember, if we want to get closer to the Primordial, we have to be more and more like ‘Her.’ She’s a woman, so we have to be women too,” The melodious female voice replied. “Either you give up or you accept. After you become a Witch, you’ll become a true woman, and your appearance and charm will be enhanced substantially. You’ll have the ability to turn invisible and use substitutes. You’ll gain a rudimentary mastery of various dark magic, you’ll be skilled at disrupting the divination of others, and you’ll also gain the favor of the black flame and icy frost.

“The main ingredients are every drop of an Abyss Demonic Fish’s blood and an Agate Peacock’s egg.

“The supplementary ingredients are 80 ml of purified water, five drops of Jimsonweed juice, 3 scales of a Shadow Lizard, and 10 drops of Daffodil Juice.”

Scenes continued to play, one after another, and Klein saw the Instigator and Assassin formula and understood their corresponding traits.

Just as he wanted to continue the divination, Madam Sharon’s spirit dispersed completely.

Klein stopped the ritual and returned to reality. He packed up the ingredients, removed the wall of spirituality, and told Dunn Smith about the outcome of his mediumship without holding back any information. Then, he expressed his suspicions on Madam Sharon’s murder of Maynard.

“Pleasure doesn’t require her to kill anyone of a higher rank or position in society... Hmm, we need to investigate where Madam Sharon has been over the past few years and understand her origins. We need to look for the dark hall that you saw. Of course, this will need to be reported to the Holy Cathedral, and they can assign investigators accordingly. We can’t leave Tingen as we wish.” Dunn nodded slightly and looked around. He said, “Go to the first floor, check if those servants are still in deep sleep. If anyone is awake, bring them over and make them sign a confidentiality contract as per protocol. I’ll be in charge of the second floor.”

He found a black cloth and covered the Sealed Artifact 3-0271.

Upon hearing that, Klein suddenly understood why the intense battle hadn’t brought the servants over—the Captain had sent them into a deep sleep from the very beginning.

Klein’s body was still cold and stiff. He had to slow down and move forward in very, very light steps.

When he passed the bedroom door, he extended his hand and pulled out the two Tarot cards at the door. He wiped them and put them back into his pocket.

After he left the room, he walked towards the stairway.

After taking a few steps, he suddenly thought of a question—how would he make sure that the person was in a deep sleep?

Check with divination one by one? That’d be troublesome... The Captain is a Nightmare; he should be an expert in this. I’ll have to ask him if he has any fast and simple methods.

With this in mind, Klein turned around walked towards the bedroom door, step by step, as he fought against the cold and stiffness in his body.

Before he came close, he looked through the ajar door and saw the shattered pieces of the angled full-body mirror.

There were still large shards of the mirror clinging to the frame, all the size of a palm.

In the cracked mirror, Dunn Smith, in his black trench coat, was kneeling beside Kenley’s dead body, doing something.

Suddenly, he lifted his head. His gray eyes were deep, and the corners of his lips were tainted with crimson blood.

Crimson blood.

Without thinking, Klein turned around, left the side of the door, and leaned his back against the wall.

CHAPTER 201: INQUIRY

Klein held his breath with his back against the wall as he faced the darkness of the corridor.

What's Captain doing? What's wrong with him? Was he drinking blood? Is this a sign of him losing control? Klein's mind was a mess, incapable of effective thought.

Nearly twenty seconds later, Klein clenched his teeth. With the help of the control he had over his body as a Clown, he silently made his way down the stairs.

Later, he then intentionally took heavier footsteps and made his way back to the door of Madam Sharon's bedroom.

Klein looked in to see the Captain wrapping Sealed Artifact 3-0271 with the black cloth. His expression was serious, his face clean.

It was as though what Klein had seen just now was only an illusion.

Glancing sideways, Klein saw nothing abnormal with Kenley's body. It was the same as it had been.

He inhaled and asked, "Captain, how am I going to confirm if those servants are still asleep? I can't make an accurate judgment just based on Spirit Vision alone. They'll have various emotional reactions due to their dreams which will be reflected in the color of their auras."

Dunn Smith fiddled with the Spirit Medium Mirror and was silent for a few seconds. He said with a raspy voice, "I'm sorry. I forgot about that. I've made too many mistakes tonight.

"There's no need for you to check, I'll confirm it."

He lifted his hand and pressed his glabella, then he closed his eyes, allowing formless ripples to spread towards the first floor.

It was crystal-clear to a Nightmare if anyone was asleep or not.

Klein froze when he saw this. He looked down and bit at the insides of his lips.

Captain, were you really drawing me away just now...

What are you doing? Do you know what you're doing...

He abruptly turned to look at the window, only to see the crimson moon hanging high in the sky, seemingly unchanged for thousands of years.

After collecting himself, Klein used the cover of picking up his tarot cards, revolver, half top hat, and other items to closely examine the corpses of Kenley and Madam Sharon.

They maintained the same look as when they died, but their skin was turning pale at a rapid rate. They also had tinges of blue and black marks.

It's a little weird, they seem to be missing something... It's not something specific, but more of a feeling... Klein muttered to himself. He felt his hair stand on end due to the chilly wind blowing through the shattered window.

At that moment, Dunn opened his eyes and said in a deep voice, "They're all still asleep, but some of them are close to waking up."

"That's good, that's good..." Klein looked at the Captain, not knowing what he was saying.

Dunn surveyed the surroundings and said, "Clean up the scene, then get someone from the nearest police station to come over. Oh, and make a trip back to Zouteland Street and get Frye to come help out."

Klein gave the Captain a deep look and nodded with his teeth clenched.

"Okay."

With Dunn's help, Klein quickly cleaned up the scene and left Madam Sharon's house through the front door.

Walking through the garden and coming outside, Klein couldn't help but look back. All he saw was the silent nursery in the darkness. There was no light at all.

He turned, his heart heavy. He soon located the nearest police station based on his memory—this was common knowledge to the Nighthawks.

Knock. Knock. Knock. Klein knocked on the steel door.

Sometime later, the officer on duty passed through the courtyard with a lantern in hand. He opened the door and observed Klein suspiciously.

"What's the matter?"

Klein failed to force any expression. With a heavy face, he produced his documents and showed it to the police officer.

"There's a serious murder case at 15 Osna Street. Immediately call for other officers to head there to help out!"

The police officer lifted his lantern and scrutinized the documents before putting his feet together and saluted.

"Yes, sir!"

Having settled this, Klein headed back to Zouteland Street on a rental carriage.

On the way back, he sat in the dark carriage. His thoughts were in a mess and unfocused.

Kenley is dead...

I remember that he was recently engaged... His parents are still alive...

What was the Captain doing just now...

Does he crave fresh blood...

Or does he have other motives...

His memory is still as poor as before, without any obvious improvement. Th-this means that he doesn't have the warning signs of losing control!

But he's known about the "acting method" for some time now. Does the fact that his memory hasn't improved mean that there's a problem...

No! It must be because the Captain is still figuring out the proper way to act as a Nightmare!

...Yes, the most important reasons why Kenley died was because of Sealed Artifact 3-0271. It was the Captain who gave it to him...

What am I thinking! It was a logical decision back then!

...It was also the Captain who suggested using Sealed Artifact 3-0271...

Calm down, calm down, I cannot make blind guesses. But I cannot wait around either, or the situation might worsen!

I'll send a letter to Madam Daly later and see if she knows what this situation means. Even if she doesn't know the exact answer, she'll definitely understand the signs of danger and inform the Holy Cathedral...

That way, we can smother the problem in the cradle and get the Captain back to normal!

No, the Captain might not have a problem. I might've misunderstood something. I'll see what Madam Daly says...

...

Klein had already made a decision when the carriage arrived at 36 Zouteland Street. He was no longer flustered and helpless as before.

He went up the stairway toward the entrance of the Blackthorn Security Company with heavy steps and opened the door from a key he fished out.

The familiar setting calmed him down considerably. It reminded him of how he felt when he asked the Captain for help every time something was wrong.

Taking a deep breath, Klein went to the recreation room and found Frye reading alone under the gas lamp.

Frye turned to look at Klein, his cold face revealing a look of concern and worry.

"Did something happen? Where's Captain and Kenley?"

Klein replied with a raspy voice, "Kenley's dead; he died at Madam Sharon's hands. We all made mistakes... The Captain is guarding the scene. He needs your help there."

Before they left, the Captain had informed Frye about the general situation. He told Frye that if they weren't back within two hours, he was to send a telegraph to the Holy Cathedral. Similarly, since they had to apply for Sealed Artifact 3-0271 and enter Chanis Gate at night, Royale, who was guarding Chanis Gate was also notified of the mission. According to the internal guidelines of the Nighthawks, a Captain could permit the opening of Chanis Gate at night. If the Captain was present, then only the Captain could enter.

Frye froze for a moment, then he let out a sigh. He drew a crimson moon on his chest.

He put on his coat and hat and headed out the door. When he walked past Klein, he suddenly said softly, "You don't need to blame yourself. Making mistakes is something we can never avoid. We must always trust our partners."

"Yeah..." Klein closed his eyes, his vision turning blurry.

Klein and Frye first headed to the basement to notify Royale before locking the door to the Blackthorn Security Company and rushing to Madam Sharon's house.

It was nearing dawn by the time they got Kenley's corpse and Madam Sharon's half decapitated body back.

Dunn stood in front of the mortuary, silently looking inside. It was some time before he turned to Klein and said, "Go home first. You just experienced an intense battle, you must be exhausted."

"Alright." Klein didn't reject the suggestion.

He puckered his lips and stole a glance at the Captain before quietly leaving the Blackthorn Security Company. He took a carriage back to Daffodil Street.

Just as he had done the previous time, he easily entered his bedroom and locked the door.

Taking out the silver ritual dagger, Klein sealed the room with a wall of spirituality. He then sat at his desk and wrote urgently:

"Dear Madam Daly,

"I've noticed that there's something odd about the Captain recently. During a mission, he secretly..."

Klein stopped when he reached this point. His mind had gone blank. He didn't know how to continue or how to describe the incident.

Pa!

He threw the pen and crumpled the piece of paper in front of him into a ball. Looking at it, he pounded heavily on the table, sending a reverberating thump across the room. Klein closed his eyes and covered his face with his hands. He didn't move, as if he had become a statue.

Five minutes later, he sighed. He put down his right hand and burned the ball of paper with his spirituality. He watched it turn to ash as it fell into the bin.

After organizing his thoughts, Klein took out a fresh piece of paper and wrote:

"Dear Madam Daly,

"We just completed a mission and regrettably lost a partner. The exact details are as follows...

"...Back then, I felt that with my present standards, my Spirit Vision was incapable of accurately ascertaining whether the servants were asleep or not, and that it was very troublesome to do divinations for every one of them. Thus, I returned with the intention of asking for the Captain's advice. At that moment, through the mirror's reflection, I saw the Captain kneeling beside Kenley's corpse, with crimson blood covering his mouth.

"I'm not sure what exactly happened, nor do I know the state the Captain is in. I hope that you can give me an answer."

...

After writing this, Klein read the letter again with a heavy heart before folding it in half.

He then set up a ritual and activated his Spirit Vision to summon Daly's messenger. He summoned the strange face which was only a mouth without any eyes or nose.

He saw the red tongue laced with irregular sharp teeth and five pale fingers on the tip of the tongue. Klein silently handed the letter over.

When everything was restored back to normal again, he sat down and continued writing.

This time, he planned to ask Mr. Azik.

"...On a recent mission, something strange happened to my superior. He sent me away and kneeled beside the corpse of a teammate. His mouth was covered in crimson blood.

"Have you encountered something like this in your memories before? How can I help my superior?"

After folding the letter, Klein took out the copper whistle, put it to his lips, and blew hard.

In the silence, illusory white bones came flying up from the desk like a fountain and finally formed a huge monster. It was almost four meters tall, still covered in a faint glow. Its head was still poking through the ceiling, looking no different from before.

Klein flicked his wrist and threw the letter. The white bone monster caught the letter and gripped it tight

Klein blew the copper whistle again and saw the messenger break into illusory white bones and fall like rain before vanishing through the surface of the desk.

Klein felt much calmer after finishing everything, but he didn't stop trying. He moved the chair back and stood up. He then walked four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog.

The lofty palace and the ancient mottled table appeared before his eyes, as though it would stay the same for tens of thousand of years.

Klein sat at The Fool's seat of honor. Then, he took out the spirit pendulum from his left sleeve and conjured a yellowish-brown goatskin and a fountain pen in front of him.

He wanted to divine the Captain's situation that night!

After some thought, Klein wrote the first divination statement.

"Dunn Smith's abnormality would lead me into danger."

In mysticism, divination that involved any danger to the diviner was hardest to interfere. It was an instinctual ability of spirituality.

In other words, as long as there wasn't an extremely strong disturbance, Klein would be able to get an accurate result from the divination about his own situation.

This was also the reason why he would divine if there was danger in the mission even though he knew that Madam Sharon had the ability to interfere with divination. He also knew that Madam Sharon wasn't strong enough to affect this kind of divination.

In order to determine Captain Dunn Smith's situation, he decided to eliminate all disturbances and perform the divination above the gray fog.

He held the pendulum with his left hand as he recited the divination statement seven times. He closed his eyes and entered a Cogitation state.

After a few seconds, he opened his eyes and they returned to their normal color.

He looked at the topaz pendant, and he felt heavy-hearted because the pendulum was spinning clockwise. The rotation wasn't small, nor was the speed slow.

It meant that the result was positive.

It meant that Dunn Smith's abnormality would lead him to danger!

And the danger level was significant!

After he closed his eyes, Klein "wiped" away the previous content and wrote down a new divination statement.

"The reason for Dunn Smith's abnormality."

He put away the topaz pendant and leaned back into the chair. He recited the divination statement as he entered a dream with the aid of Cogitation.

In the blurry illusory world, he couldn't see or discover anything. There was nothing except gray fog.

That means that there was insufficient information, so the divination failed... Klein looked at the goatskin on the long bronze table as he muttered bitterly and helplessly.

Suddenly, he felt a strong feeling of exhaustion. He realized that it was the result of an intense battle, continuous rituals, and multiple divinations.

Klein wrapped himself up with spirituality and stimulated a rapid descent from above the gray fog and returned to reality.

He had a few nightmares that night. The ending of each dream was either Kenley vomiting his organs, or Dunn Smith with crimson blood around his mouth.

...

The next morning, Klein was on duty at Chanis Gate so he arrived early at the Blackthorn Security Company.

At that very moment, Rozanne, Mrs. Orianna, and the other clerks had yet to arrive for work. Klein walked through the partition and saw the wide open door and Dunn Smith, who was seated in the Captain's office.

Dunn had taken off his coat, and he only had his white shirt and black vest on. He sat in his seat while he held a cup of coffee in his hands. He was staring at the wall in front of him blankly.

His hair seemed dry, his gray eyes looked dull, and his face was showing obvious signs of weariness too.

Even for the Captain, who's experienced many similar incidents, it's still unbearable to lose two teammates in such a short period of time... Klein's heart winced as the scene of the shattered fullbody mirror reflecting Dunn kneeling before Kenley's corpse with his face covered in crimson blood appeared once again.

Klein clenched his teeth and looked away.

After nearly twenty seconds, he composed himself and extended his hand to knock on the Captain's door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Dunn put down his coffee cup as his gray eyes became deep again.

He took a deep breath and said, "I've reported the matter to the Holy Cathedral, and they gave an initial reply.

"The Church will compensate Kenley's family with 3000 pounds, and the police department will give 1000 pounds as bereavement payment..."

A total of 4000 pounds. To most middle-class citizens, that's wealth that can't be earned in a lifetime... Kenley's weekly salary was seven pounds, making an annual income of 364 pounds. Adding in any bonuses and additional income, he would make at least 380 pounds. Four thousand pounds is equivalent to ten years of his income... Such wealth can provide at least 200 pounds of income a year... Although money cannot make up for the loss of Kenley, it's the only effective thing at the moment... Klein had many thoughts passing through his mind before he finally sighed.

"That's all we can do."

The Church of Evernight couldn't be faulted when it came to such matters.

Dunn pulled his collar and said in a deep voice, "Go to the basement and take over Royale's shift."

"Alright." Klein nodded slightly.

He turned around and walked towards the door. Then, he heard Captain add as though he was talking to himself, “We’ll send Kenley home later...”

Send Kenley home... His father, his mother, his siblings, his fiancée, how will they react... Klein’s heart tightened, and he was somehow glad that he didn’t have to face such sorrow.

He knew it was the mentality of an escapist, but he was really afraid of seeing the agony in the eyes of Kenley’s parents, or how his fiancée would seem to lose her soul. He was afraid to see their expressions of hidden resentment and afraid of hearing their sobbing.

Klein quickened his pace and hurried to Chanis Gate. He completed the shift change with Royale in silence.

He sat in the duty room and occasionally took out his silver pocket watch and watched the time pass by slowly.

After an unknown period of time, Klein suddenly heard illusory sounds that overlapped one another.

He saw the four black dots appear on the back of his hand and understood that it was either Justice, The Hanged Man, or The Sun praying to him.

He had no way to answer them immediately. He could only wait till the notification ended, for more prayers to come, and until the next morning when he returned home.

Having just fished his keys to open the door to his house, Klein saw the maidservant Bella wiping the dining table while his sister, Melissa, who was dressed up, and his brother, Benson, came downstairs.

“Didn’t you just go to Mass last week?” Klein asked curiously.

Benson smiled and said, “That sounds like the memory of a person who hasn’t gotten any sleep the entire night.” “Huh?” Klein looked even more confused.

“Today is the first day that ‘The Return of the Count’ will be releasing tickets for sale,” Melissa explained.

Klein smacked his forehead and took off his hat.

“I’ve been too busy recently. I totally forgot about it.”

Especially these past three days... He added with a sigh.

Melissa looked at him with concern and said, “Your breakfast is in the kitchen. Eat it and get some sleep. Benson and I thought that since we’re going out, we might as well drop by Saint Selena Cathedral to have Mass.”

“Alright.” Klein waved and bade his brother and sister farewell. He had a simple breakfast and returned to his bedroom.

After he did the preparatory work, he took four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog. He saw that Justice and The Hanged Man’s corresponding crimson stars were burgeoning and shrinking faintly.

He extended his right hand and emanated his spirituality. Then, blurry images formed before Klein’s eyes. Miss Justice’s prayer sounded in his ears.

...

“I pray for you to listen.

“Because of the Qilangos incident, my father hired a Beyonder to protect me. There are also others who are watching over me secretly. It wasn’t easy for me to finally find an opportunity to pray to you. I would like to apply for leave from the Gathering next week. I believe this will pass soon.”

Klein subconsciously glanced at the blurry image. The image was filled with fog, and there seemed to be a huge bathtub with rippling water. Miss Justice was wrapped in a bath towel.

He retracted his gaze and started listening to The Hanged Man's prayer.

His description was different from Justice's, but he was making the same request. He too needed to ask for leave due to the aftermath of Qilangos's death.

Klein nodded slightly and responded to their prayers respectively.

"I'm aware."

Then, he sent a message to The Sun's crimson star.

"The upcoming Gathering will be canceled temporarily."

...

City of Silver.

Derrick Berg was paying attention in the training field. The sky above his head was still dark, with occasional flashes of lightning that lit up the sky.

Suddenly, his vision went blurry before he saw the thick fog and the ancient palace that looked like the home of a giant. He also saw Mr. Fool, who sat in the depths of the gray fog.

"The upcoming Gathering will be canceled temporarily."

His voice reverberated, but the view before Derrick had already returned to normal.

He wasn't shocked at such a magical incident because Mr. Fool contacted him in this manner to remind him before every Gathering.

Derrick looked up at the woman in front of him subconsciously, a member of the City of Silver's six-member council, Shepherd Lovia.

This terrifying expert kept switching between a smile and being aloof. She told every young man at the training field that they would join the patrolling troops soon and rid the dark monsters in the vicinity. That wouldn't be training anymore.

Elder Lovia didn't notice anything strange... She seems to be getting weirder. Is it because there's a High-Sequence Beyonder's evil spirit among her Grazing souls? Derrick thought.

...

Klein returned to his bedroom, threw himself into bed, and quickly fell asleep. He dreamed about what had happened these past few days.

Suddenly, he felt like he was being shaken by someone, and he suddenly woke up.

Klein opened eyes and saw a gigantic white bone hand.

The hand paused and threw the letter on the bed. Then, it vanished into thin air.

Mr. Azik's reply... Klein grabbed the letter, full of hope.

Klein opened the letter, feeling both expectant and nervous before he began reading Azik's reply.

"...I thought about a few possibilities regarding the scenario you described, and I remembered a few things about Vampires and Mutants.

"Natural vampires were already on the brink of extinction before the dragons and giants bowed out of the stage of world history. Later on, they might occasionally be discovered. The Vampires we usually talk about, as well as those mentioned in folklore, are more similar to Beyonders. I recall that the name of a potion in a particular pathway is called Vampire.

"If your superior is now in a half-insane state, then it's very likely that he mistakenly consumed such a potion. The result of mixing two potions from different pathways makes a halfinsane state a certainty. Yes, I vaguely remember the pathway of the Evernight, which is also the Sleepless pathway as you know it, can be interchanged at High Sequences with the pathway of Death and the pathway of Giants. But it doesn't include the Vampire pathway.

"Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that your superior might have accepted it willingly. After all, Vampires have a long life, an exceptional constitution, and excellent looks. When compared with these benefits, accepting a state of half-insanity is reasonable."

Klein froze when he read the letter. He didn't expect Mr. Azik to provide him with this much information.

The Death pathway is also known as the Corpse Collector pathway. It can be interchanged at High Sequences with the Sleepless pathway. I knew about this from Emperor Roselle's diary. But to think that it can also be interchanged with the Giant pathway after Sequence 4... The Giant pathway is the one that the City of Silver possesses, which is also the present-day God of Combat pathway... I've always suspected that Giant King Aurmir was the ancient God of Combat...

Yes, Emperor Roselle's diary described the Church of Evernight and the Church of the God of Combat as mortal enemies... Could this be because the pathways they possess can be interchanged at higher sequences?

If I follow this line of thought, I can find an explanation as to why the three ancient churches, the Church of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, are at odds with each other. That's because the pathways of Sailor, Bard, and Reader can be interchanged at High Sequences!

Yes, during the end of the previous Epoch, the Pale Era, it 's likely that the fall of Death was caused by the Evernight Goddess and the God of Combat...

The Captain is perfectly fine usually, other than his poor memory. He doesn't show any signs of half-insanity. I can rule out the possibility of him consuming the Vampire potion!

Mr. Azik has recalled quite a number of things recently... Could the Creeping Hunger have really stimulated his memories?

Klein nodded and continued reading the letter.

"Mutant isn't the name of a particular species. It's more like the description for many similar creatures. Under normal circumstances, they're no different from an ordinary human, but there is an innate, suppressed, twisted desire in their hearts. This desire erupts when they come into contact with a certain scene or object. They become monsters, succumbing to their desires for blood and massacre.

"After everything settles, they will return to normal again. They become slightly more merciless and unfeeling after each time their desires erupt, this will continue until their souls are completely twisted.

"The only example of this that I can recall is the werewolf. They're similar to humans for the most part, and they cannot be distinguished using most Beyonder abilities. But, during the full moon, the twisted desires in their hearts intensify, and their bodies also change accordingly.

"Your superior might be a potential Mutant. The death of your teammate might have triggered his true nature.

"These are all my personal guesses. I cannot guarantee that there are no other possibilities since I haven't gotten all my memories back. Perhaps your theory of this being a precursor to losing control can also explain this.

"There's no saving him whether he has consumed the Vampire potion, or if he's a Mutant. Of course, many people have theorized that Mutants were originally ordinary human beings, but were put under a strange curse or corrupted by some evil god or devil, and, thus, transform into a different monster under certain circumstances.

"Also, I'm not too sure if you can treat him when you notice the warning signs of losing control. I would advise that you report this directly to your superior's superior and hope that there's still time."

Klein looked gravely at the desk after placing the letter down. He slipped into deep thought.

He had to admit that the theory of a Mutant was a very possible one, but he couldn't eliminate the possibility that it was a warning sign to him losing control.

All I can do is wait for Madam Daly's reply... I sent the letter two nights ago, so she should've received the letter yesterday morning. If she replied immediately, I should've seen the letter last night or this morning... It's almost noon... Does that messenger not dare to go near Chanis Gate? Or was Madam Daly held up by something? Klein shook his head. He still felt exhausted and used Cogitation to force himself to sleep.

In the hazy world, Klein was suddenly jolted to his senses. He knew that he was dreaming.

He then saw Dunn Smith in his black trench coat appear in front of him.

Responding in a manner congruent with a normal dream, Klein gave a delayed greeting, "Good morning... Captain..."

Dunn nodded slightly and said, "Leonard found a clue when he was investigating the Lanevus case. He needs your help. The Mystery Pryer that the Holy Cathedral sent over won't arrive until tomorrow morning because of a train fault."

"Alright..." Klein replied in a fleeting voice.

Dunn thought for a moment before adding, "There's no need for you to return to Zouteland Street. Head to 62 Howes Street directly. Leonard will be there waiting for you. It's been hard on you."

The moment he finished his sentence, Klein's dream shattered. Klein instinctively opened his eyes.

Howes Street... Isn't that the area where the Divination Club, my classmate Welch, and the member of the Aurora Order lived? There sure are many incidents lately, one after another, as if they're culminating in something... Klein thought as he got up slowly. He washed up in the bathroom before changing into a white shirt, brown vest, and black trench coat. He then picked up his hat and went down to the living room.

It wasn't eleven yet, and Benson and Melissa hadn't returned home. Klein informed Bella that he was going out and that she didn't need to prepare lunch for him.

He then took a public carriage to Howes Street and saw the messy-haired Midnight Poet—Leonard Mitchell, whose hair exuded beauty, waiting for him in at building 62.

Leonard was still in a thin white shirt despite the chilly September weather. He had paired it with beige pants. He swept his green eyes at Klein.

“This might be the building rented by Lanevus under a false name.”

“How did you figure it out?” Klein asked out of curiosity.

Leonard pointed to his head.

“Since you found a clue from Hood Eugen and suspected that Lanevus was likely connected to that member of the Aurora Order—the cloth merchant Sirius Arapis—I had to change my line of thinking after my normal investigations revealed nothing. I started investigating the Aurora Order.

“The previous report told me that Sirius had interactions with many of the residents on Howes Street,

so I searched every one of them and found a problem with this one.” “What problem?” Klein asked.

Leonard raised his brows. “An obvious problem. The guest here appears very rarely. He claimed to be going to the Southern Continent to do business after Hanass Vincent’s death and never returned. His records are very realistic, and the police didn’t discover anything.”

“This could only be a coincidence.” Klein creased his brows.

“Of course, a coincidence. But when I showed the residents around here Lanevus’s picture, an old man felt that he looked similar to the resident at number 62, other than his different glasses.” Leonard took out a black-and-white photograph from his pocket.

Why didn’t you say so earlier... Klein lampooned inwardly. He entered 62 Howes Street with Leonard, and at Leonard’s request, he started to divine if there were any hidden compartments or secret chambers.

The result was yes!

“The secret chamber or hidden compartment in this building.”

Klein wrote down another divination statement. He took a seat on the sofa and closed his eyes as he recited the statement.

Seven times later, he entered a dream. His vision was blurry.

In the blurry world, Klein saw a wooden bookshelf. He saw rows upon rows of books. He saw that one of the books had been taken away. He saw the wooden surface beside the book open, revealing a hidden compartment.

The scene quickly disappeared as Klein opened his eyes and told Leonard, “In the study.”

Klein wound the topaz pendulum around his wrist and followed Leonard into the study. He saw the wooden bookshelf he had seen in his dream.

“Pull out that book, the place it’s covering has a hidden compartment.” Klein pointed at the book nearest to the sides.

“So it’s here... I couldn’t find anything when I searched the place, and I had no choice but to return to Zouteland Street to request for help,” Leonard grumbled as he walked over. He pulled out the book Klein had pointed out.

After searching the area, he finally found the mechanism to open the hidden compartment.

A letter lay silently in the hidden compartment.

A letter? Lanevus hid a letter here? Klein found it extremely strange.

After he divined to see if there was anything dangerous within the letter and received a negative answer, Leonard picked up the letter and opened the unmarked envelope.

Leonard pulled out the letter within and unfolded it.

Klein leaned forward to get a look of its contents. All he saw were the first few paragraphs of the letter:

“Hahaha, congratulations. Congratulations on finally finding this letter!

“This means that you’re not too stupid, nor too slow. You qualify to take part in this game of life and death that I’ve designed.

“Child laborers that die before their time. Factory workers who seldom live past ten years after entering the factory because of their working conditions. Female workers who risk severe illnesses for a meager salary. I see boundless resentment surrounding every factory, turning the surroundings oppressive and gloomy. This is the worst of times, and also the best of times. Our game shall take place under such a setting.

“Fools, prepare yourselves, I’m going to issue you a hint!”

Klein and Leonard lifted their gaze from the letter and exchanged glances. They muttered, "He's crazy, right?"

"Lanevus is secretly a lunatic?"

A lunatic who truly has a delusional disorder and an antisocial personality... Klein thought and felt a tug at his heartstrings. He quickly redirected his gaze to the letter.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the hint is that I've placed a bomb in Tingen, a bomb that will grow stronger over time.

"Seek it and finish it before it explodes. If you lose the game, there will be a boom, and the entire city of Tingen will be reduced to a ruin. Trust me, I'm not lying at all about this.

"—Lanevus, who enjoys giving his friends pleasant surprises."

"A bomb?" Klein looked at Leonard and muttered to himself, perplexed.

Leonard held the letter up to the sunlight and looked as he flipped it around. He didn't find any other clues.

"The term 'bomb' is probably an expression. I've never heard of a bomb that can grow stronger."

Klein creased his eyebrows and said thoughtfully, "No, I mean, he might be using 'bomb' to reference something in mysticism. Such as an evil ritual that continuously accumulates power..."

Leonard cocked his head as though he was listening to something when suddenly, his facial expression grew solemn.

He nodded as his green eyes constricted. "Maybe you're right. Isn't there a description at the beginning of the letter? Child laborers that die before their time, factory workers who seldom live past ten years after entering the factory because of their working conditions, female workers who risk severe illnesses for a meager salary... Boundless resentment surrounding every factory... Perhaps, that might be the energy source that constantly strengthens Lanevus's bomb."

"Yes... that's very possible!" Klein suddenly tensed up and said, "We need to report to the Captain immediately!"

Leonard laughed and said, "There's no need to be so nervous. You should know that Lanevus is a Swindler. The part where he said that he didn't lie might be a lie itself.

"Of course, regardless, we have to return to Zouteland Street to report to the Captain. It's best if we can request the Holy Cathedral to send a mysticism expert over and find the location of the altar through the abnormal accumulation of resentment."

Someone is apparently very familiar with protocol... But why would the setup of such an altar need Hood Eugen's help? What role does a Psychiatrist play in this? Klein didn't object to the idea. He left 62 Howes Street with Leonard and rushed back to Zouteland Street on a hired carriage.

Just as they entered the Blackthorn Security Company's door, Klein saw two familiar faces, one voluptuous and one scrawny. They were Maynard's wife and sister.

They were still in black dresses and black hats. The fine checkered black gauze concealed their faces.

The two ladies were chatting with Rozanne, and when they suddenly saw Klein's return, they turned around and walked forward.

"You really are the cream of the crop in this industry." Mrs. Maynard nodded slightly and said in a low voice, "I'm very pleased with the outcome and am also impressed with your work approach. Here's the reward that you deserve."

The scrawny woman passed a light brown paper bag to Klein. It was filled with thick stacks of cash. There were ten pound notes, five pound notes, one pound notes, and also five soli and one soli.

"It's a total of 230 pounds," the scrawny lady stated simply.

Klein was in no mood to pay any attention to the money. He passed it to Rozanne and said, "Take this to Mrs. Orianna. I doubt the two respectable women would make a mistake counting the money."

At that moment, the corner of his eyes caught the Tingen City Honest Paper in Mrs. Maynard's hands. On the most eyecatching spot on the front page, there were two pieces of news.

Old baron's widow dies in involvement with MP Maynard's murder.

Mayor Dennis takes the blame for the worsening public security in Tingen for the past three months and resigns.

So that's the official excuse for Madam Sharon's case? I've yet to read the newspaper today... Klein nodded at the two ladies and followed Leonard through the partition to the Captain's office.

"How was it? Did you find any clues?" Dunn Smith closed his document, lifted his head, and looked at Klein and Leonard with his deep gray eyes.

"We found a letter that was left behind by Lanevus." Leonard didn't provide any further descriptions and simply passed the Captain the letter filled with madness and provocation.

Dunn opened the letter and scanned through it quickly. He rubbed his temples as he said, "He really is a lunatic."

"He's only a Sequence 8, Sequence 7 at most."

Klein agreed from the bottom of his heart. "Lanevus is a dangerous figure who can damage the stability of social order. Even though he's weak, we can't belittle him."

Then, he told Captain about his and Leonard's assumption.

Dunn touched his receding hairline as he said, "That was my thought as well. I'll immediately send a telegram to the Holy Cathedral and ask them to send a mysticism expert over for assistance.

"Who knows how dangerous Lanevus's bomb could be. We have to be extremely careful. When the Holy Cathedral replies to me, I'll arrange for the follow-up."

Klein and Leonard exchanged glances and nodded simultaneously as they said, "Alright."

Seizing the moment when Captain was sending a telegram to the Holy Cathedral, Klein returned to the reception hall to grab a copy of the Tingen City Honest Paper from Rozanne.

He stood at the partition and read the two articles with full concentration.

"...The widow of the old baron of the Khoy family, Madam Sharon, was suspected to be involved in the sudden death of Member of Parliament Maynard... The police received a tip and took action at night. They discovered that Madam Sharon and her accomplice had knocked out her servants to carry out a pagan ceremony in her bedroom. They refused to surrender and attempted to resist arrest, resulting in the death of a heroic police officer.

"Finally, Madam Sharon and her accomplice paid the price for their evil deeds with their lives."

...

"...Mayor Dennis takes the blame for the worsening public security in Tingen and resigns. He also announced that he wouldn't be running for reelection next year. For the next few months, Deputy Mayor Mr. Harry will take on the responsibilities of mayor."

...

A heroic police officer... Is that the description of Kenley? Klein sighed and knew that it was the best way of handling the situation.

According to the internal rules of the Nighthawks, in order to prevent the forces of evil from taking revenge on their family members, their names would be kept confidential even if they sacrificed their lives.

He folded the newspaper quietly and returned it to the reception desk. Klein suddenly saw a visitor who walked through the entrance.

She was a young lady, in her twenties at most. She was in a ruffled hat and loose dress. She had lovely facial features, blonde hair, green eyes, and also a depressed yet silent temperament. She was quite a beauty.

The most eye-catching thing about her was her stomach that bulged out. She looked like she was more than seven months pregnant.

Klein was stunned, and he felt that he had seen the young pregnant lady before.

Suddenly, he heard Leonard say in surprise, "Miss Megose?"

Megose... Yes, the young lady who was conned by Lanevus! She's pregnant with Lanevus's child, and as such, there might be something wrong with her mental health. She says her child sings in her stomach and also whistles... Klein was suddenly enlightened and he wasn't surprised that Leonard knew Megose.

When they relaunched the investigations of people related to Lanevus, the lady's photo had been seen by every Nighthawk.

Klein knew her even earlier. Her aunt Christina, whose savings had been conned by Lanevus, had brought her to the Divination Club to ask for help. Her aunt even asked if the child in her stomach could be used for divination.

Then, as Megose heard Leonard's voice, she looked over at the both of them vacantly and replied politely, "Hello."

"Miss Megose, what brings you here to the Blackthorn Security Company? Do you have anything that you'd like us to do for you?" Klein took two steps forward and asked.

He was very confused by Megose's sudden visit. He felt it was an extreme coincidence.

We just found Lanevus's letter, and Megose comes visiting?

Megose touched her stomach and smiled faintly.

"Somehow or other, I suddenly thought of coming to Zouteland Street and suddenly thought of coming up to take a look."

Her mental health seems to have worsened... Klein recalled that he hadn't managed to activate his Spirit Vision and check on Megose's situation previously. Hence, he lifted his teeth and was about to tap his left molars.

Just then, a series of thoughts screamed through his head in increasing intensity.

"Don't look!

"Don't look! Don't look!

"You'll die!

"You'll die if you look! "You'll die if you look!"

...

Klein stood rooted on the spot like a statue as his forehead was covered in cold sweat.

It was like having a deep and heavy nightmare that he nearly couldn't wake up from.

Suddenly, he understood something. He had failed to activate his Spirit Vision the last time because his spirituality had noticed an unimaginable danger. It slowed him down subconsciously, so he missed the opportunity and forgot the follow-up.

At that point, Klein had yet to digest the Seer potion entirely, and he had yet to advance to Sequence 8, so the warnings of spirituality were very subtle and difficult to notice. But now, Clown's spiritual foresight was so clear and obvious!

After nearly twenty seconds, Klein finally shook off his paralysis. He looked sideways at Leonard and realized that the Midnight Poet was also covered in cold sweat, and his eyes were filled with horror.

Suddenly, Klein understood what the bomb Lanevus was referring to!

It's the baby in Megose's stomach!

It's the baby that he left behind!

Klein suddenly associated the description in the letter with Hood Eugen's answers, and he suddenly remembered something that he read in Emperor Roselle's diary.

"I started the Industrial Revolution with my own hands and personally ushered in the Age of Steam and Machinery, but this will only become the hotbed for the descent of an Evil God upon this world?"

Klein's pupils constricted as he thought of a possibility that he instinctually refused to admit.

No! That's not right!

The baby in Megose's stomach can't be the son of some evil god or an evil god waiting to descend upon the world!

No! Why would Hood Eugen do such a silly thing! Although his Psychiatrist power can help Lanevus fool Megose and use her as a spawning vessel in her semi-unconscious state...

No! The resentment of child laborers that die before their time, and the factory workers and female workers who live less than ten years aren't helping the son of an evil god to grow rapidly!

No!

D-do not look directly at God...

Klein instinctively reached for his pockets. He held the Flaring Sun Charm in one hand and Azik's copper whistle in the other.

He acutely noticed that the cold, gentle Beyonder feedback of the latter had vanished as if it was being suppressed by an invisible power. However, the former was still warm and comforting.

Making use of this comforting feeling, Klein entered a half Cogitation state. He blocked out his feelings of worry and didn't leave anything to chance.

He turned and shot a look at Leonard Mitchell, then tipped his chin toward Megose.

He then controlled his expression with his Clown abilities and smiled at Megose.

"Do you want coffee, black tea, or nothing at all?"

Megose stroked her stomach as if she was listening to something.

"A cup of warm water. I suddenly thought of chatting with you guys about Lanevus. I have the feeling that you know a lot."

"Who told you that?" Leonard was no longer the frivolous guy that he usually was. His smile had turned rather stiff.

Megose suddenly giggled.

"My child told me. He knows a lot. He's very smart!"

Klein fought back the urge to curse. He turned to the partition and signaled to Leonard to keep Megose calm.

Leonard forced a smile and pointed toward the sofa.

"That's exactly what I'd like to talk about. We want to have a chat with you about Lanevus."

Behind the receptionist desk, Rozanne looked on in confusion. She suddenly realized that she didn't need to do anything.

Klein quickly made his way past the partition and directly pushed open the door to Dunn Smith's office, then closed the door with a bang.

He saw Dunn looking shocked before turning serious and saying in a heavy voice, "Captain, something serious has happened. I know what Lanevus meant by bomb!" Dunn stood up and pointed outside.

"Megose?"

He had obviously heard Leonard's shocked exclamation, but he was unable to see the looks of fear and cold sweat on his teammates' faces.

Klein nodded and explained quickly, "I tried to activate my Spirit Vision to observe Megose to ascertain her mental condition, but my spirituality stopped me from making the attempt. It kept "warning" me not to look, that I would die if I did so!

"This made me recall a saying, 'Do not look directly at God.' Even if the fetus in Megose's stomach isn't an evil god attempting to descend upon this world, or the spawn of an evil god, it's definitely a legendary creature.

"Captain, connecting this to the black altar in Hood Eugen's memories, to his Psychiatrist abilities, to the tragic world as described in Lanevus's letter, I think that my guess is quite close to the truth: Lanevus obtained a ritualistic magic linked to the True Creator from an Aurora Order member. With Hood Eugen's help, he turned Megose into a vessel to gestate a certain power. Then, this power will make use of the resentment, oppression, and gloominess surrounding the factories to quickly grow

until maturity. In other words, the ritual itself needs this resentment, oppression, and gloominess in order to succeed!"

Dunn considered Klein's words seriously for nearly twenty seconds before nodding with a solemn expression.

"I'll ask for assistance from the Holy Cathedral immediately. Let's hope that the baby in Megose's stomach can still wait!

"Of course, we can't just sit back and do nothing. Tell Leonard to keep Megose calm and keep her company. Notify Mrs. Orianna, Rozanne, and the rest. Get all the non-combatants to evacuate!

"I'll head to the back of Chanis Gate after I send the telegram. We have to prepare for the worst, which is if Megose's baby is born before the arrival of reinforcements from the Holy Cathedral.

"As Captain of the Tingen Nighthawks, I have the authority to use Saint Selena's ashes during emergencies!"

Saint Selena's ashes... The ashes of a High-Sequence Beyonder... The core seals within Chanis Gate... Klein's worries eased a little. He quickly thought of other things.

"Captain, we can also ask for reinforcements from the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind; they should have similar holy items!"

Klein suddenly had a stroke of inspiration as he muttered to himself, "Lanevus's case was originally under the purview of the Mandated Punishers. Old Neil and I were there to help when one of their senior members lost control..."

As he spoke softly, his voice grew to a crescendo.

"Captain, can you ask the Mandated Punishers if the member who lost control was tracking or keeping Megose under surveillance?"

"Are you suspecting that he lost control because he got corrupted by the baby in Megose's stomach? They were responsible for Megose when the investigation was happening..." Dunn answered seriously. "We cannot delay any further. Go to Mrs. Orianna and the rest. I'll take this time to send a telegram to first ask for assistance from the Holy Cathedral, then I'll inform the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind. Yes, I'll also have to send a telegram to the police department and see if they can come up with an excuse to evacuate the citizens nearby."

"Alright." Klein had taken a few steps out of the room when he suddenly recalled something. He thought about the coincidence of Megose's sudden visit.

The image of the building with the red chimney appeared in his mind. He turned around quickly and said to Dunn, "Captain, one more thing. Do you remember the coincidences I told you about? The clue to the Antigonus family's notebook in the house opposite the kidnapping, Ray Bieber who didn't make it out of Tingen in time, Hanass Vincent exposing himself because of a coincidence, and how a member of the Aurora Order lost his life because he chanced upon me, etc.

"All these coincidences are very subtle and hard to detect, but the fact that Megose suddenly came looking for us right after we discovered Lanevus's letter is too obvious and direct. This coincidence was already laid bare before us, it's no longer hidden! I think that the person behind this will soon take center stage!

"Also, why would Madam Sharon take the risk in killing Member of Parliament Maynard? Is this also a coincidence?"

Dunn thought about it and gave a solemn reply, "I'll include this point in the telegram."

Klein didn't waste any more time. He exited the office and went straight for the accountant's room on the opposite side.

Mrs. Orianna was preparing the budget for the last three months of the year. She wanted to complete it in advance just in case the Captain forgot about it again. When she saw Klein enter, she greeted him with a smile.

"Lad, what claims do you have to submit today?"

Klein exhaled.

"Mrs. Orianna, we will be on vacation today. Go back home immediately."

Orianna froze for a while, looking at the serious face before her in a daze.

A few seconds later, she stood up in a fluster.

"Alright."

Klein added in a hurry, "Help me inform the rest of the clerks in the office and the armory. I'll inform Rozanne."

"Yes!" Orianna didn't even pack. She grabbed her handbag and hurried out of the accounting office.

She turned and stared at Klein after entering the corridor. She drew a crimson moon near her chest and said, "All of you will be blessed by the Goddess!"

Thank you... Klein replied in silence. He made his way past the partition into the receptionist area only to see Leonard chatting with Megose about Lanevus, his expression rigid.

Klein leaned toward Rozanne as he filled up a cup of warm water. He then whispered, "Go home, it's dangerous here. Come back tomorrow."

Rozanne opened her mouth in shock but closed it again after seeing Klein's stern expression.

She lowered her head and packed for about ten seconds before picking up her bag and leaving the receptionist area.

Just as she was walking past Klein, she bit on her lip and whispered, "To be honest, I respect the Nighthawks as much as I hate other people who become Beyonders..."

...

After seeing the clerks evacuate the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein brought warm water to Megose, bent his back, and placed it on the table in front of her.

"I have something to settle, I'll be back soon."

As he stood up, he took the opportunity to lean in towards Leonard's ear and whispered, "Keep her here."

Leonard clenched his teeth and widened his mouth into a grin. He continued his conversation with Megose and noticed that Megose was getting a little restless, as though she was losing her focus.

Klein returned to the Captain's office, only to realize that Dunn had already gone underground. There was a telegram on the table. It was the reply from the Mandated Punishers.

"Yes. We will be there immediately."

Yes... The Mandated Punisher did lose control because of Megose... Klein couldn't calm himself down as he made his way to the corridor. He didn't know if he was waiting for the Captain to retrieve the holy ashes or for reinforcements to arrive.

I wonder if High-Sequence Beyonders can teleport... I don't think so... He paced around a few times, suddenly feeling peaceful. He saw that the gas lamps on both sides of the corridor were now dyed a faint blue.

Amid the darkness, Dunn followed the stairs into the corridor. In his palm was a square, palm-sized box of ashes.

This box looked as though it was made out of pure silver, but it also felt like it was human bones. It was carved with many mysterious patterns. Klein felt colder the closer he was to the box, it was as if the cold was rapidly seeping into his blood.

Dunn's face was bathed in an icy blue light. He told Klein, "Go to Chanis Gate and pick out a Sealed Artifact with the highest offensive ability. Decide exactly which one with your own judgment. I've already told Seeka and the Keepers inside. Take note of the hidden threats. Of those, there are three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts, which are..."

"Oh, now that I've taken out the ashes of Saint Selena, Seeka and the Keepers cannot leave their positions now."

At this point, Frye and Royale were both at Kenley's house for the funeral preparations. The Archbishop at Saint Selena Cathedral had gone to the countryside to preach.

"Alright." Klein didn't hesitate, immediately turning towards the basement.

When he was nearing the intersection, Klein suddenly stopped. He knew that most of the Sealed Artifacts behind Chanis Gate at Tingen City were Grade 3 and wouldn't have much of an effect on the baby in Megose's stomach. It was, at the very least, a legendary creature.

The Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem might work, but it takes too long to have an effect. It's unsuitable for this... There are only three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts in Tingen City, and they're all very dangerous artifacts that can easily result in my death... I estimate their powers to be about the same as my Flaring Sun Charm, so I cannot have too many reservations later. I'll use the Flaring Sun Charm without any hesitation! It would definitely be as powerful as a Grade 2 Sealed Artifact; after all, it has the power of divine blood in it... Klein's mind whirled as he nodded indiscernibly.

He felt for the Flaring Sun Charm and Azik's copper whistle in his pocket, but he was surprised to find that the sensation of the latter was back.

Regardless of whether it was useful or not, Klein took out a pen and paper set that was used for divination and wrote a short message.

"The person who made my fate disharmonious and stole the skull of your child has appeared. He has arranged for Megose to enter the Blackthorn Security Company at 36 Zouteland Street. It's highly likely that Megose is harboring the son of an evil god.

"The situation is very urgent."

He put away his pen and folded the piece of paper. Klein took out the copper whistle at the intersection and blew, then watched the giant skeleton messenger appear before him.

In the corridor within the deep and serene basement, the nearly four-meter-tall bone messenger disappeared before Klein's eyes after taking the letter.

When all that was left of the surroundings were the classic gas lamps embedded in the walls, he put away Azik's copper whistle and walked towards Chanis Gate.

As he was writing the letter, he had already decided on which Sealed Artifact to pick.

Firstly, it would be almost impossible for the Grade 3 three Sealed Artifacts to have any effect on the baby in Megose's stomach. Unless it was an item like the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem which had hidden powers.

But, at that very moment, in such a situation, Klein wasn't in the mood to explore or research a secret that might or might not exist. Plus, most Sealed Artifacts would carry a certain level of danger for the user. So, Klein eliminated the Grade 3 Sealed Artifacts that would weaken the user without affecting the enemy.

Secondly, the Tingen Nighthawks didn't have any Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts and only three Grade 2 artifacts. That was originally a secret that Klein wasn't allowed to know, but due to the urgency of the situation, Dunn made use of an emergency clause and told him the general situation.

Dunn Smith couldn't hold any other Sealed Artifacts at the same time while holding Saint Selena's ashes.

And behind the Tingen City's Chanis Gate, there were three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts: 2-030, 2-078, and 2-105.

The name of 2- 030 was "Inexhaustible Poison." It originated from a Beyonder with an unknown Sequence name who suddenly went mad and cut his wrist to commit suicide. He let his blood flow into an ordinary silver cup. But when his blood ran dry, the silver cup wasn't filled, and the liquid in the cup became crystal-clear and alluring. It was a temptation that even a Sequence 5 Beyonder had failed to resist. After he drank the liquid, he died of poisoning on the spot.

After the person died, the poison seeped out through his pores and pooled together again. Its volume was the same as before he drank it. Not one bit less.

Dunn said that the researchers in the Holy Cathedral suspected that the poison could kill a High-Sequence Beyonder. However, the question lay within the fact that it was almost impossible for a High-Sequence Beyonder to be tempted to drink it. Furthermore, the traits of 2-030 were obvious, so no one would consume it by accident. If one wanted to poison them, they had to first capture them, seize control of them, and then force it down their throat. But then, why go through the trouble?

2-030 would constantly tempt the living things around it to drink it. The user had to be fully focused on resisting its power. Any slight negligence would make one drink the poison as though it was only natural to do so.

When Dunn finished his description, Klein decided, almost instantly, to not pick that Sealed Artifact.

The name of 2-078 was "Door of Death." Its appearance was like a normal wooden door. Any living thing that passed through it would die instantly. No High-Sequence Beyonder had ever participated in the test.

It possessed living traits and constantly attempted to escape. It could change its appearance and disguise itself into pre-existing doors. If the user made any mistakes, he would lose control of it. Then, he would need to be careful and not pass through any door near him. He would have to try to wait at the original spot for help or break through a wall to escape.

Klein thought of using 2-078, but after reevaluating the latter two, he felt that the intuition of a legendary creature would be very sharp and would be able to differentiate whichever door was the Door of Death.

In the end, he decided to pick 2-105.

The name of the Sealed Artifact was "Blood Vessel Thief." It looked like a thick, stiffened blood vessel. Anyone who touched it, regardless of whether they were protected or not, would have their life stolen. In the beginning, it wouldn't be obvious. But, if one didn't break contact with it, the effects would be visible half an hour later. Dunn said that a Sequence 5 heretic held onto it for two hours. He turned from a brawny man in his thirties into a hunched old man who had loose skin, thin white hair, and missing teeth.

The most important trait of 2-105 was that the person wearing it would have the chance to steal an ability from a target within a specific range. Even High-Sequence Beyonders could be robbed of their abilities, but the probability was smaller.

Within a ten-minute time period, the person who was robbed would lose the corresponding ability while the person who wore the item would be able to use the ability skillfully. Ten minutes later, the ability would vanish, and the person who was robbed would need to wait a couple of days to recover.

Regardless of whether it works or not, it will at least raise the probability of success from five percent to ten percent. I'm the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck, after all... Besides, our main goal is just to take precautions and make preparations to deal with the worst case scenario. We won't necessarily have to take action... Hopefully, reinforcements will arrive soon... Klein stopped outside the duty room, showing no signs of hesitation anymore.

About the negative effects of Sealed Artifact 2-105, he wasn't worried because he wasn't planning to use the artifact himself...

His plan was to give it to Leonard, as he already had the Flaring Sun Charm and Azik's copper whistle who he had no idea if it would still be suppressed.

My dear Poet, it's time for you to show your true secret... Klein muttered and saw Seeka Tron standing by the duty room.

With her white hair and black eyes, the part-time author remained silent for a few seconds before saying, "Why don't you guard Chanis Gate? I'm stronger and more experienced than you."

But you don't have Flaring Sun Charms... Klein replied with a smile, "Madam, I'm already a Sequence 8.

"It wouldn't be safe here either. There are many Sealed Artifacts that possess living traits that are itching to take action. Well, if we fail, the people here will definitely not survive.

"Heh heh, our goal upstairs is to buy time and wait for reinforcements. It might be safer than being around Chanis Gate."

Seeka Tron puckered her lips slowly and drew a crimson moon on her chest.

"May the Goddess bless all of you."

As Dunn didn't have the time to write the document in time, Klein couldn't enter Chanis Gate directly. All he did was watch Seeka Tron push open a tiny crack and enter.

After a few minutes, she appeared by the door, and she was holding a thick, blood-tainted, pale blood vessel in her left hand.

Klein extended his hand to take it, and he immediately felt a faint current surging in his body.

...

In the reception hall of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard had already shaken off his stiff state from earlier, and his expression didn't look abnormal as he talked about the recently discovered house that Lanevus rented before.

"Is that so? He never told me about it before..." Megose replied normally, creasing her eyebrows slightly.

Then, she grabbed her blonde hair, pulled out a handful, and casually threw it into the trashcan by the side.

Leonard was dumbfounded. He gulped with difficulty, and his palms were full of cold sweat once again.

...

Klein walked up the stairs to the second floor with the Blood Vessel Thief in his left hand.

He looked at the door that led to the Nighthawks break room, where Dunn Smith stood silently in his black trench coat. His eyes were gray and deep, just like when they had first met.

"Reintroducing myself, Nighthawk, Dunn Smith."

The voice of the past sounded in Klein's ears as the scene of Dunn by Kenley's corpse flashed in his head. There was blood all over his mouth.

He suddenly fell silent and walked over. He lifted his left hand and said, "Captain, I picked Sealed Artifact 2-105. I plan on letting Leonard use it."

Dunn nodded slightly. He didn't ask why but turned and pointed at his office as he spoke.

"The Holy Cathedral sent a telegram. They said that they'll gather a team of strong Beyonders immediately and asked us to stall for as much time as possible and try to wait.

"About those coincidences, they didn't give any reply. I think they don't have any conclusions as of yet. Or perhaps, the person who handles the telegrams doesn't know the actual situation and has no way to make guesses. You know, we have to make the best use of time. Telegrams can't be too long."

"Yes." Klein nodded. He got closer to the partition and looked outside as he said, "How's the situation?"

"Nothing strange as of yet." Dunn looked down at the Saint's ash box in his left hand.

Seeing how Leonard and Megose were having a good time chatting, Klein didn't interrupt them. He retreated to the Nighthawks' recreation room and faced Dunn with the corridor in between them.

Just then, Dunn suddenly let out a self-deprecating laugh.

"I forgot something."

"What is it?" Klein replied, puzzled.

Dunn looked sideways at him and said, "Daly told me to explain myself to you."

"Huh?" Klein was stunned, as he couldn't quite understand what the Captain meant.

After two seconds, before Dunn could reply, he suddenly understood.

Madam Daly didn't reply immediately because she thought it was unnecessary. She had forwarded the matter to the Captain and let him explain himself.

Th-that means that there isn't anything serious with the Captain!

At this critical point, Klein suddenly felt a surge of joy erupt inside of him.

Dunn sighed.

"I did want to send you away back then since I was going to do something that involves the secrets of the Church and the Nighthawks. But Kenley's death left my mind in chaos. At that moment, all I could think of was a clumsy excuse, thus, giving you the opportunity to witness what I was doing."

"What secret is that?" Klein pressed, now being more at ease.

He had almost forgotten about the threat of the evil god's son, or the existence of a legendary creature outside.

Dunn weighed his words and said, "There might be a law in mysticism. Heh, even though I haven't read many books, I'm still aware of what a law means.

"This law is called 'Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility.'

"The characteristics of a Beyonder is never destroyed or reduced. It's only passed from one carrier to the next."

Klein's eyes opened wide. He suddenly came to a realization and asked thoughtfully, "For example, the Sealed Artifacts, mysterious objects, or a potion's main ingredients that are left behind by Beyonders who have lost control?"

"Correct." Dunn nodded solemnly. "This isn't only the case for Beyonders who lose control; it's also the same for normal Beyonders after they die."

"The same..." Klein mulled over Dunn's description, now having a faint idea of what the Captain was doing.

He suddenly recalled when the suited clown died. He recalled the blue, thumb-sized blood sphere that was suspended beside the corpse of the suited clown. Frye's explanation had been that there would always be strange transformations after a Beyonder died.

Dunn continued with his deep gray eyes, "But what's different about Beyonders who lose control is that a Beyonder who dies normally won't leave behind ingredients or objects. Th-they're equivalent to a potion, a potion that corresponds to their Sequences, except that they're lacking a certain amount of supplementary ingredients."

Equivalent to potions... Equivalent to potions! Klein squinted as a flash of inspiration went through his mind. The endless darkness in his mind was illuminated in that instant.

He suddenly understood many things, figuring out why the Beyonder pathways wouldn't be broken, even if the creatures used as main ingredients were going extinct.

Apart from using substitutes, one could also simply use the remains of Beyonders!

That should also be the reason why they only handed out complete potions at the higher Sequences! Another reason is to prevent the formula from being revealed to people adept at divination or mediumship rituals... Many guesses went through Klein's mind.

Dunn looked at the recreation room and explained in a deep voice, "A few years ago... Well... I can't exactly remember just exactly how many years it was, but I wasn't the Captain of the Nighthawks back then. I unexpectedly realized this problem, and after interacting with Daly, who had just become a Beyonder, I immediately sent a report to the Holy Cathedral. The Holy Cathedral told me to keep it a secret and gave me two choices. Heh heh, that's also the reason why it's me, and not Daly, who's explaining this to you. Whoever exposes this is responsible for it.

“The first choice was to pretend to know nothing, just like a large number of Nighthawk Captains and Deacons, and allow the Holy Cathedral to continue dealing with the remains of Beyonders who died through normal means. The second was for them to give me a unique, simple ritual and the corresponding techniques. It would allow me to temporarily consume the items produced by the unique characteristics within a limited period of time. Well, this is only suitable for Sequences of the same pathway at my level or lower.

“This would augment my Beyonder characteristics, and I would also become more powerful. In terms of abilities regarding dreams, my powers now are not too different from a Sequence 6’s. That’s also the reason why I dared to deal with Madam Sharon.”

“So that’s why... To think that something like this exists...” Klein slowly exhaled.

He finally understood why he couldn’t come up with a logical explanation despite his best efforts. That was because he didn’t have all the relevant information and was unable to fill in the blanks.

Yes, this does match the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility... Would consuming these characteristics cause a qualitative change in the Captain by constantly accumulating them? Klein allowed his mind to wander.

After glancing at him, Dunn let out a bitter smile.

“I chose the second option, but not because I wanted to become more powerful. If I wanted to become more powerful, quickly digesting a potion and receiving an advancement is the best and most direct way.”

“Yes,” Klein agreed sincerely. “Consolidating the characteristics of the potions of the same Sequence will increase the risk of losing control at the same time as it improves your abilities, right?”

Dunn shook his head solemnly. “No, these are the remains of normal Beyonders and not Beyonders who have lost control. Well, after I came to know of the acting method, I realized that it would increase the difficulty of digesting the potion.”

“Then why do you still continue?” Klein asked in shock.

Dunn placed his hand into his pocket, intending to take out his pipe, only to find that he had left it in his office.

He shook his head and let out a self-deprecating smile.

“I just said that becoming more powerful isn’t the reason why I consume their remains.”

Having said that, he paused, his eyes wandering to the blue flicker of the gas lamp opposite where he was standing.

“They were all my partners... We’ve gone through many things together. We’ve dealt with monsters in the darkness and insane heretics together. Some of them have saved me, and I’ve saved quite a number of them. We walked together in the silent night. We fought together in battles that aren’t visible to the general public. We faced danger together. We had each other’s backs.

“I really can’t bear to part with them. I remember the lad, Hitte. He broke into tears the first time we went on a dangerous mission. I remember Adelaide, heh—he was Rozanne’s father. He once blocked an evil curse for me with his arm. I remember the lady, Dwayne, and her warm temperament which was like the dawn. She would always silently record the things we encountered. I remember Kenley being someone who knew how to do many things like play the seven-string guitar, sing, tell stories, even though he wasn’t tall. He was more like a poet than Leonard... I miss them very much.

“I hoped to continue fighting with them, to continue dealing with the monsters in the darkness, to deal with the crazy heretics, to protect Tingen City with them. Thus, I chose to consume their remains.”

Dunn’s gray eyes seemed to flicker. His reliable and dependable persona broke down considerably at that moment.

His lips arched upward slightly as he continued, “They’re still with me in my dreams. Adelaide loves to read, and he often reads at the solarium. He often tells me to discipline Rozanne and get her to mature faster, to the point that Rozanne complains about me becoming more and more like her father and has become scared of me. Hitte is a person who cannot sit still and has to hunt in the forest every day. Dwayne always stands by the window of her bedroom and watches us chat. Kenley, who recently joined, created his own seven-string guitar and sings while strumming it... I really miss them.”

“Captain...” Klein subconsciously muttered. His eyes became blurred and watery. He couldn’t help but rub his eyes and curse in his heart. *Fuck. Captain, you’re making me cry...*

But I finally understand the reason for the Captain’s slow progress despite using the “acting method”... Klein let out a silent sigh.

“Unfortunately, Old Neil died after losing control. Otherwise, he would’ve brought along much joy to us.” Dunn retracted his gaze. He lowered his head and massaged the bridge of his nose.

A few seconds later, he lifted his head and let out a bitter smile.

“This is a selfish decision.

“I don’t know what the true wishes of Adelaide, Kenley, and the rest were, and, thus, selfishly made a decision for them.

“I truly am a selfish person.” “No...” Klein shook his head.

...

On the sofa in the receptionist area, Leonard watched Megose pull out clumps of her hair as his expression became more and more rigid.

Megose seemed increasingly restless as she constantly picked up the glass for a mouthful of water. She looked at Leonard with a contorted expression.

“I don’t know why, but I suddenly feel a little unwell.”

Leonard Mitchell was about to reply when he suddenly saw Megose reach for her face. She clawed out a piece of flesh—a long piece of flesh—a piece of flesh stained with blood.

“My face is a little itchy.” Megose smiled, a little embarrassed. The edge of her lips spread to where her cheekbones were, revealing a row of white teeth and bright red gums.

FUCK! Leonard cursed out silently. He felt that the situation was worsening way too quickly.

His lips quivering, Leonard turned to listen as his expression immediately turned steely green.

He forced a smile and apologized to Megose, who was clawing out pieces of her flesh.

“I need to use the bathroom.”

“Al... right...” Megose’s tone became ethereal.

She rubbed her belly and said, “My... child... is a little restless...”

Leonard didn’t reply. He hastened his footsteps and approached the partition.

After entering the corridor, Leonard stared deeply at the box of ash in Dunn Smith’s hands and exhaled in exasperation.

Following that, his expression turned firm.

“Captain, I’m afraid that it’s too late. We have to deal with Megose and her baby immediately. Otherwise, the whole of Tingen will suffer terrible losses. This isn’t something that can be avoided just by evacuating the citizens around us. I know that you’ve already sent such a telegram.”

Dunn knitted his eyebrows and asked, unusually stern, “Are you sure that the situation has worsened to such an extent?”

“Yes. In no more than three minutes, Megose will undergo a mutation, and her child will descend upon us,” Leonard said with a certain tone.

At the same time, he glanced at the thick, large blood vessel wrapped around Klein’s hand and said, “Sealed Artifact 2-105? Let me use it. I can better utilize its abilities.”

“Alright.” Klein didn’t hesitate to hand the Blood Vessel Thief over to Leonard.

That was something he intended to do so from the beginning.

At that moment, Dunn tugged at his collar and patted down his trench coat. He spoke with a determined tone, “I’ll head out with Saint Selena’s ashes first. Come out after ten seconds; remember, come out only after you finish counting to ten. Then, regardless of my condition, direct your strongest attacks at Megose and her baby without wasting any time.”

With that said, he turned around and walked towards the partition with the urn of ashes.

“Captain...” Klein let out a shout, his lips dry.

“Captain!” Leonard also shouted.

Dunn stopped and looked back. He had a gentle expression as he said with his mellow voice, “Don’t worry about me. I’m not alone. Adelaide, Dwayne, Hitte, and Kenley are all fighting alongside me, no matter what kind of danger I face.”

He paused for a moment before speaking, his gray eyes gentle.

“There’s no need to be too nervous as well. We’re guarding Tingen City.”

His lips arched upwards, forming his usual smile.

After saying those words, he didn’t stay any longer. He stepped through the partition, his black trench coat following behind him.

“Captain!” Klein and Leonard shouted at the same time, their tears falling uncontrollably, but Dunn didn’t slow down.

We are a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against danger and madness, but even more so, we are guardians.

Beep! Beep! Beep! The telegram set up in the Captain's office suddenly came to life, seemingly having received a new telegram.

But Klein and Leonard couldn't be distracted. They were counting the movements of the second hand on the clock as their red eyes welled up with tears.

"10."

"9."

"8."

...

Just then, Dunn Smith carried the silver, bone-like square box into the reception hall with a solemn expression.

Megose, who was pulling out clump after clump of blond hair, tore a wound that was deep enough to show her bones. It was as though she was triggered by something. She suddenly stood and pointed at Dunn Smith in his black trench coat. She shrieked, "You want to kill my child!

"You want to kill my child!"

Boom! The shrill and terrifying voice reverberated. Klein felt like he was being struck in the head with a sledgehammer. He suddenly forgot to count as he had a headache and felt dizzy.

His vision went red, and there seemed to be liquid flowing from the tip of his nose.

He subconsciously looked sideways, and he saw the corner of Leonard Mitchell's eyes. The tip of his nose and the corners of his lips were covered in fresh blood. His face was extremely pale, and his body was wavering as though he was about to fall.

I'm probably in the same state... Klein reined back his thoughts and continued to count in silence as he skipped two numbers.

"5."

"4."

...

Struck by the terrifyingly sharp voice, Dunn Smith's deep gray eyes were filled with red veins. Every single strand was crystal clear.

The blood vessels in his face protruded out as well; every one of them like a poisonous snake. There was also a gurgle as red liquid flowed out of his ears as well.

Despite that, he did feel dizzy. Other than his right hand pausing, his strong willpower drove him to press down on Saint Selena's urn and open the lid.

Inside the box, there was deep darkness. In the darkness, there was fine resplendent sand. The scene was magically beautiful, just like the cosmos being stored in a box.

The surroundings suddenly became dark, and the darkness engulfed the entire reception hall. In the air, there were countless black, cold, and smooth threads floating.

They surged towards Megose and entangled her almost instantly.

It wasn't like a spider web, but more like the tentacles of some unknown creature!

Megose had already torn out her right eyeball. It hung by a thin cord of flesh underneath her eye socket. She stared at Dunn Smith with hatred as she roared, "You must die!"

Bang! Dunn was cast away by a formless force and slammed heavily into the wall opposite. The wall cracked, and bricks were thrown up.

He spat a mouthful of fresh blood onto the ground, but both his hands were still tightly holding onto Saint Selena's urn. He held onto it for dear life and kept it from falling to the ground.

Those countless black, cold, and smooth threads tightened and bound Megose firmly to the spot. No matter how much blighttainted flames rose up suddenly, or how her skin began to secrete a liquid that smelt like brimstone, neither of those defenses dealt any damage to the threads holding onto her.

"3!"

"2!"

"1!"

Klein and Leonard dashed out through the partition simultaneously. One of them was holding onto a warm thin gold slice, and the other had already aimed his five fingers with the Blood Vessel Thief wound around his left wrist at Megose.

Megose, who no longer looked human, struggled as flesh protruded from both sides of her shoulders. They were a mixture of blood vessels and green veins, round like a child's head.

Above the two heads, cracks rapidly spread and seemingly turned into a pair of eyes.

Megose suddenly noticed danger approaching, and she opened her mouth. The corner of her lips cracked all the way up to her ears.

She was going to deal the Blaspheme Curse to every enemy that attempted to harm her child!

At that moment, Leonard clenched his left hand into a fist as his wrist made a half turn.

His pale face turned livid, and the vessels protruded like bunch of tiny poisonous worms.

"..." Megose's Blaspheme Curse was left stuck in her throat as it came to a sudden halt.

She seemed to have lost the ability to speak and the ability to evoke curses.

Klein seized the opportunity and muttered an ancient Hermes word in a deep voice.

"Light!"

I want light, and there will be light!

He suddenly felt the thin gold slice that was covered in mysterious patterns become boiling hot as he saw it emit a blinding light, as though it had become a miniature sun.

Right on the heels of that, Klein injected more than half his spirituality into it and threw the Flaring Sun Charm towards the restrained Megose!

The reception hall instantly turned transparent as darkness and gloominess vanished simultaneously. The black fine threads that entangled Megose shrank as though they were instinctively avoiding something.

But before Megose obtained her freedom, she already saw the sunlight.

At some point in the fight, a hole had ruptured in the ceiling of the Blackthorn Security Company, and the hole went all the way to the rooftop of the third floor. The bright blue sky and glaring sunlight shined through simultaneously.

The thin gold slice combined with the sunlight above Megose's and immediately expanded in size. It went from a spherical light to a sphere with countless flames spiraling around it.

Rumble!

The entire building shook vigorously, and the glass windows on the nearby streets shattered.

However, the power of the spherical light concentrated its might at its core, without dissipating much.

It enveloped Megose, and the light was so glaring that Klein, Dunn, and Leonard couldn't open their eyes.

Klein held back his tears and looked through squinted eyes. He saw that the light had dispersed, but the flames were still soaring. Among them, there were many black ashes dancing in the air.

Megose and the baby in her stomach were nowhere to be seen. Just like the coffee table, water glass, newspaper, and sofa in the area.

Is it over? Did we finish the son of an evil god before it descended upon this world, taking "His" mother out at the same time? Klein still couldn't believe it.

His experience of playing video games told him that the final boss couldn't be taken care of so easily!

Suddenly, he felt goosebumps all over. His Clown instincts told him that there was extreme danger approaching!

Without thinking, Klein rolled to the left abruptly.

Just then, a long arm with an extremely sharp white bone blade cleaved the spot, seemingly out of nowhere. The monstrosity had an abnormal beauty, and it floated in mid-air. It was unbelievably fast and almost impossible to dodge its attacks.

Whoosh!

Klein's clothing on the right side of his chest was ripped apart, his skin ruptured, and his flesh, along with his bones, was split into two!

The wound was so deep that he could almost see one of his lungs.

If it wasn't because he sensed danger approaching beforehand and dodged in time, that slash would've sliced him in half.

But, even so, Klein slowed down. Extreme pain filled his head and scattered his consciousness.

At the end of the white bone blade, a figure rapidly flew out. If it wasn't for the bump on its stomach, perhaps no one could identify it as Megose.

Her hair and dress had been burned entirely. The skin on her face and body was charred black and was peeling off, flake after flake. Her nose had melted, leaving only two small black holes behind. Her eyeballs were nowhere to be seen, and there were faint white flames dancing in the empty sockets.

The two "heads" that had popped up from both sides of Megose's shoulders had been burned away. Her left arm had become the white bone blade that she was holding; it looked demonic, yet holy.

Creak!

As the ground shook, Megose ignored Dunn and Leonard, as well as the black, cold, and smooth fine threads that were hurtling towards her again. She phased over to Klein who had come to a stop after rolling away. She aimed the white bone blade at Klein's neck and was about to slash down.

Suddenly, she heard a voice that contained a rich blasphemous tone.

"Submit!"

Leonard lifted his left hand and aimed his palm at Megose. The Sealed Artifact 2-105 wrapped around his wrist had turned from a thick pale, blood-tainted blood vessel into a crimson "intestine" that had expanded to the point that it looked ready to explode.

With the aid of the Blood Vessel Thief, Leonard had successfully stolen Megose's Blaspheme Curse and was attempting to use her power to seize control of her!

Only an ability at her level was effective!

Under the influence of the Blaspheme Curse, Megose bent her waist, and her knees were constantly trembling. Her motions came to a halt as the surrounding black threads surrounded her as though they had found a delicious prey. Klein also took the opportunity to roll in the opposite direction, leaving a trail of fresh crimson blood behind him.

However, he got some reprieve from his extreme pain and reached his hand into his pocket. He took out the last Flaring Sun Charm.

He took the opportunity when Megose was stationary to finish her off, once and for all!

If she were to hold out until the "baby" was born, the outcome would be beyond their imagination!

Boom!

Megose's head exploded on its own. Her charred skin and flesh flew in all directions.

But her headless body seized the opportunity to shake off the effect of the Blaspheme Curse!

Boom! Megose's charred body transformed into a projectile that shot towards Leonard. Since the Blaspheme Curse had been forcefully disrupted, Leonard was temporarily frozen on the spot.

At that moment, Dunn Smith was still holding onto Saint Selena's urn tightly. His face was abnormally pale, and the black, cold threads that were created was still short of surrounding Megose.

Creak!

Megose slammed into Leonard, throwing him to the wall. The wall collapsed from the impact.

Leonard's bones cracked, and there was blood spewing out from his mouth incessantly. Without even having the urge to struggle, he fainted instantly.

Megose raised her white bone blade, but the countless black threads that emanated from Saint Selena's urn enveloped her again and was about to bind her to the ground.

Without the luxury of time to mind his injuries, Klein quickly took out the thin charm.

Just as he was going to recite the ancient Hermes incantation, something suddenly sounded in the deep,

dark, yet quiet room. "Waaa!"

It was the cry of a baby.

"Waaa!"

The baby in Megose's stomach cried. It squirmed, wanting to come into this world in a bid to help its mother escape from her predicament.

The black, cold, and smooth threads appeared to suffer a shock as they seemed to be suppressed by an invisible power which led to their retreat backward.

"Waaa!"

Dunn and Klein became dizzy at the same time. They felt their throats contract involuntarily as their contracting air passages instantly stifled them.

Crimson liquid flowed from their nostrils, their eyes, and their ears. All of their capillaries seemed to have ruptured.

If it wasn't for the fact that Klein had undergone the torture of hearing the mutterings and ravings every time he headed to the world above the gray fog, as well as Dunn holding onto the ashes of Saint Selena, they definitely would've fainted on the spot, just like Leonard Mitchell.

Megose's headless body turned over and looked at Klein who saw her charred skin and flesh peeling to the ground, and the holy, yet evil white bone blade.

Having escaped its influence thanks to his rich experience, Klein immediately felt his scalp tingle and forgot about the pain in his right chest. He seemed to witness his enemy charge towards him maniacally, not giving him any time to recite the incantation, infuse spirituality, and throw out the Flaring Sun Charm.

Just as he was about to dodge the attack, Klein saw Megose suddenly pause. He saw Dunn Smith's black trench coat fluttering, and the Captain diagonally across him had buried his head. There were multiple thick twitching objects on his back as if they were venomous snakes or tentacles—or monsters!

Dunn was using his abilities as a Nightmare to forcefully impede Megose's movements.

Bam! Bam! Bam! With a mere struggle from Megose, the thick tentacle-like objects that protruded from Dunn's back exploded at the same time!

A large amount of blood splattered out, covering every corner of the room like rain.

Dunn wasn't disappointed at the result, for the blood had been absorbed by the black threads created by Saint Selena's ashes.

They had been absorbed!

The countless cold, smooth, tentacle-like threads entered a frenzy. They swarmed forward and bound Megose tightly, wrapping themselves around her bulging, squirming stomach.

An opportunity!

Klein was as nervous as he was excited. He prepared to shout the ancient Hermes word for "Light."

"Waaa! Waaa! Waaa!"

The cries of a baby could be heard once again, more frequent, and more incessant this time around!

The countless black threads suddenly came to a pause, retreating and trembling again as if they had all been struck by lightning.

Dunn's expression changed when he realized that Megose was about to free herself. Without hesitation, he retracted his right palm, formed a claw, and stabbed it into his own chest—his left chest!

He quickly pulled out his right hand, his fingers holding a bloody heart tightly. It was a still-beating heart that brought with it the sereneness of the night and a dream.

Captain... Klein watched helplessly as Dunn Smith stuffed the heart into the urn containing Saint Selena's ashes. His vision quickly blurred.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Crying that sounded like a late-night nightmare resounded. The countless cold and serene threads once again resumed their efforts as they wrapped themselves tightly around Megose!

This time, they didn't loosen their bindings despite the cries coming from the baby in Megose's stomach. In fact, they even sealed the terrifying sounds within the body!

Klein's tears fell together with his blood. He uttered a simple Hermes term in a deep voice, "Light!"

The light that illuminates the darkness! The light that brings warmth!

He infused almost all of his remaining spirituality into the thin gold piece etched with mysterious symbols, causing his mind to immediately turn blank and dizzy.

Having mustered the last of his strength, Klein tossed out the Flaring Sun Charm at Megose, who was still bound by the countless black threads.

The black threads didn't retract this time, having not followed their instincts, as if they were being willed by someone.

Thump! Thump!

Dunn's fresh heart was still beating within the box containing Saint Selena's ashes.

The sunlight once again shone in from the hole in the ceiling, shining through all three stories, right into the Blackthorn Security Company, as if it were a corporeal pillar.

It was guided here by the Flaring Sun Charm, and it was focused on Megose.

The sunlight fused with the top of the headless monster, and then exploded like the sun!

Rumble!

In the burning white splendor, Klein closed his eyes. This last scene was etched deep into his mind.

Megose's body lost its left arm, head, and multiple pieces of flesh. Its charred body crumbled instantly. The half-illusory, terrifying creature within her body no longer had the support of a physical body and couldn't complete the last stage of its transformation. It turned into a furious ball of black gas, dissolving amidst the light and flames.

Rumble!

The entire building shook violently, but this was only due to the released energy of the Flaring Sun Charm.

The charm was different from a normal bomb. Its powers were concentrated, yet restrained!

Klein fought to stabilize his body. He opened his eyes and looked ahead a few seconds later.

He saw that the walls had crumbled. He saw a charred circle where Megose once stood. Surprisingly, the floor had only melted slightly.

He saw a burned, bloody placenta on the ground. He saw Dunn Smith standing on the spot, still wearing his black trench coat.

He saw the heart in the box of Saint Selena's ashes still beating slowly. He saw Leonard Mitchell lying on the opposite side; his outcome was unknown.

The exhausted Klein felt elated and felt that he could still use ritualistic magic to save the Captain. He felt that Megose and her baby were truly finished. No—it was more accurate to say that the latter had suffered an interruption and was exorcised.

At that moment, Dunn Smith turned to look at Klein. His pale face had a warm and relaxed expression, and his voice still as mellow as it usually was.

"We saved Tingen."

After saying this, it was as if he had returned to the time when he was twenty. He no longer appeared stern and serious as he winked at Klein with his left eye.

Klein's expression froze. He saw the heart in the box of Saint's Selena's ashes stop beating. It turned into a resplendent ball of light before scattering into the surroundings. He saw the captain fall backward, his arms losing their strength.

It felt like the scene was made up of a series of paintings, but Klein could do nothing to stop it.

Thump!

The box of Saint Selena's ashes fell onto the ground, just like Klein's heart.

Thud! Thud! Even though the box wasn't covered, the darkness within the box sealed the opening, preventing the resplendent sand-like ashes from falling out. The box rolled a distance away towards Klein.

Dunn Smith fell to the wrecked floor, his deep gray eyes having lost all their luster. He was looking at the hole in the ceiling, the sunlight pouring down on his face.

Captain! Klein's vision blurred once again. He wanted to shout, but that word and the subsequent words were stuck in his throat.

We miss you too...

At that moment, the box containing Saint Selena's ashes had rolled to his feet.

Suddenly, Klein felt a pain in his chest, his pupils violently constricted as he froze in place.

He looked down to see a slightly pale palm, drenched in blood, coming out the left side of his chest.

Megose isn't dead... No, a new enemy... The mastermind behind the scenes... Am I going to die?

Klein quickly lost his consciousness, his eyes almost losing focus. His body slumped to the side.

His breathing gradually slowed and, he finally felt the palm pull back quickly. He saw a pair of brand new leather boots, and a hand reaching downward—a slightly pale hand.

It grabbed the urn of Saint Selena's ashes.

Klein's vision went black, and he lost all consciousness.

...

Burned and shattered objects were scattered around in the now destroyed Blackthorn Security Company, but there wasn't a single sound; it was just like a cemetery.

A few minutes later, Leonard Mitchell's body moved, his eyes opening slowly.

He propped himself up with difficulty and surveyed the surroundings. He saw Dunn Smith on the ground. He also saw Klein who had his eyes staring wide as a look of shock was plastered across his face. Dunn and Klein both had visible wounds on the left sides of their chests.

No... Leonard squeezed out the word from his throat as he staggered towards Klein's corpse, that wasn't far away from Dunn.

He kept checking them, going between the two repeatedly, but all he could do was accept this irreversible truth.

Leonard's knees buckled as his knees plopped to the ground. His green eyes were filled with pain as tears streamed down his cheeks, washing away the blood and dust.

He turned his head and listened for two seconds and suddenly sprawled forward. He let out an angry roar and clenched his palms into fists, and heavily pounded the floor.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Leonard kept tearing up as he pounded the floor. Amidst his sorrow was a feeling of clear hatred and a clear sense of selfabhorrence.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Leonard looked up when he heard the sounds of hurried footsteps and saw the members of the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind that had just arrived at the scene through his blurred vision.

CHAPTER 210: STORY

In a Tingen suburb, there was a house with a green lawn.

The house had a garden that had begun to wither at the beginning of September. Attached to the house was a crimson chimney.

There was a desk next to the window in the bedroom of that house. An ordinary notebook was spread open on the table.

A slightly pale hand flipped the notebook to the very first page, then it quickly flipped to the back.

As the paper flipped, the rows of words appeared faintly.

Regence, a member from the Secret Order, sold the Antigonus family's notebook as an ordinary ancient book by accident due to the influence both of weariness and illusions. It was a coincidence that made logical sense.

Affected by the calling of the Antigonus family's bloodline, the notebook secretly affects its owners, one after the other. After repeated changes in ownership, it came to Tingen. It fell into the hands of the members of the Aurora Order—Sirius Arapis and Hanass Vincent.

After they flipped through the content that temporarily appeared in the notebook and copied the corresponding potion formulas, Sirius and Hanass were worried that the Secret Order, who were good at divination, would track them down. After discussing it, they decided to avoid the risk by selling it to another person.

They didn't wait for Mr. Z's reply; perhaps because he stayed at Enmat Harbor.

Through Sirius's introduction, Hanass got to know Welch McGovern from the Khoy University's Department of History. Then, Hanass sold the Antigonus family's notebook to McGovern as an ordinary ancient book.

Subsequently, Sirius was attracted by the treasure that was said to exist on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range. He started to visit the Deweyville Library and research the mountain. He didn't think that there would be any problems, so he left his real address and name. That aligned with his personality.

During this process, he acquainted himself with Lanevus, who was reading up on information about iron mines to set up a scam.

Lanevus's hidden lunacy and swindling ability were well appreciated by Sirius. He decided to nurture him into a member of the Aurora Order. Of course, before that, an investigation was inevitable.

Sirius covertly informed Lanevus about the evil ritual of praying to the True Creator to deliver "His" spawn into this world. But he knew that the possibility of Lanevus succeeding was very low, because the difficulty level of the ritual was very high, and the requirements were very harsh. However, the latter expressed his strong interest in the matter, tempted by the possibility of obtaining a deity's approval. He planned to complete the ritual simultaneously as he carried out the plans of establishing his steelworks company.

The cunning Lanevus could tell that there was something fishy about Sirius Arapis. But for his personal goal, he didn't expose him.

He visited Hood Eugen in the asylum once again. They had known each other long ago, and they knew about their respective situations.

After a dark divination, the Antigonus family's notebook was awakened fully. Welch and his classmate died. The lucky survivor, Klein Moretti, sent it to Ray Bieber's house under the influence of the notebook. It was a destined ending.

Many rows were scribbled off and new content followed.

For some baffling reason, and a lack of sufficient explanations, Klein didn't commit suicide after that and somehow managed to stay alive.

In the Nighthawks' investigation of Welch's case that followed, he met Dunn Smith and joined the Nighthawks.

Although it had already exceeded Ince Zangwill's description, it didn't affect the development of the story.

Bacchus and his brothers were down on their luck. They lost their last chip at the gambling tables and were drowning in debt. In a bid to obtain money, they decided to kidnap and blackmail the somewhat wealthy individuals.

When they were looking for their final hideout, they chanced upon the room opposite Ray Bieber's apartment.

By then, Ray Bieber was already seduced by the power offered by the Antigonus family's notebook. He hoped to digest the gift left behind by his ancestors.

However, he was in a semi-insane state, and he couldn't make the best and safest choice. He abandoned his dead mother, but he continued remaining in Tingen City. He only found a more elusive spot to carry out his digestion ritual. It was truly pathetic. If he had been slightly smarter, the story could've become even more complicated, but his decision was made based on his instincts and his poor state of mind.

Bacchus and company purchased weapons and took the youngest son, Elliott, of the tobacco merchant, Vickroy, and held him for ransom.

Finally, they successfully carried out the abduction and took Elliot back to the apartment opposite Ray Bieber's. Vickroy's butler was entrusted with looking for help from a security company.

Because of Welch's mysterious death, security companies were short on hands. Klee chanced upon a deliveryman and happened to discover the existence of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard Mitchell and Klein accepted the job. Relying on their Beyonder powers, they quickly saved the merchant's son. Regrettably, Klein didn't immediately realize that clues to the Antigonus family's notebook were in the apartment opposite them.

However, his spirituality reminded him in his dream. As such, the Tingen Nighthawks discovered corresponding clues.

...

Sealed Artifact 2-049 arrived in Tingen. With the aid of the Antigonus family's puppet, Dunn Smith led the Nighthawks to find Ray Bieber before interrupting his digestion procedure.

Ray Bieber became a monster, and the situation was out of control.

In the end, the Nighthawks skillfully worked together and took care of Monster Bieber, but they immediately faced the attack of a member from the Secret Order.

More rows were scribbled away again, and the original content was impossible to read.

Leonard Mitchell, who possesses a secret, was going to end the situation. Before he could, Klein, who was supposed to be doomed, killed the Sequence 7 member from the Secret Order in an inexplicable manner.

That didn't affect the development of the story. Dunn Smith got in touch with the Antigonus family's notebook and flipped through its content. From that point onwards, he was secretly tainted!

...

Having finished with all his preparations, Lanevus beguiled Hood Eugen and used him to assist in his ritual. They tricked Lanevus's fiancée, Megose, to become the vessel that would carry the True Creator's spawn.

Lanevus had almost no possibility of success. The most serious problem was that even though Megose would be protected by the ritual's power, she wouldn't be able to withstand the sexual intercourse with the illusory projection of a deity. It would cost her her life on the altar.

At that moment, the kind Ince Zangwill helped Lanevus in secret.

He split off half a piece of a descendant of Death's characteristic that he obtained and planted it into Megose's body ahead of time.

Hood Eugen made Megose enter a semi-unconscious state and convinced her that the True Creator's illusory projection was Lanevus. Nourished by the accumulated resentment, gloominess, and oppression of the factory district, the ritual succeeded. Megose was pregnant with the True Creator's spawn. The deity saw through the coincidences, but since "He" wished to break through the shackles placed on him by the seven deities, "He" didn't refuse.

Hood Eugen was contaminated.

After the ritual succeeded, the mad Lanevus regained his rationality. He clearly knew that if the deity's spawn was to descend into the world, Lanevus, himself, would become one of the sacrificial offerings. How could a mortal be the father of a deity's son? This was blasphemy of the highest order!

Lanevus decided to leave Tingen ahead of time and left clues to the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind so that they could resolve the repercussions of his actions. There was ultimately a price needed for lunacy.

However, Lanevus didn't write the letter directly to the Beyonder squads. He thought it would make him look stupid.

He decided to leave the letter in one of the houses that he rented. He pretended to be playing a game with the Beyonders from official bodies. As such, he didn't bring up Hood Eugen's contamination and brought with him everything that he had obtained.

Just in case, he informed Sirius Arapis in the safest way he could. The latter didn't quite believe him, but he could faintly feel the possibility of success.

...

Selena Wood accidentally chanced upon the real magic mirror divination incantation from her mysticism teacher, Hanass Vincent.

Her bold attempt was interrupted by Klein Moretti by coincidence. The latter successfully resolved this supernatural incident that might've caused serious casualties.

The Nighthawks then investigated Hanass Vincent who had recently been awarded. Therefore, Dunn Smith coincidently saw a clear image of the True Creator in his dream and suffered severe injuries.

However, he wasn't contaminated because of what happened. That would've been noticed by the upper echelons of the Nighthawks.

The injury made Dunn Smith's contamination by the Antigonus family notebook worsen. His absent-mindedness and forgetfulness worsened, and he was getting closer and closer to satisfying Ince Zangwill's requirements.

...

Many rows were scribbled away again.

Seriously unbelievable! Klein Moretti noticed Ince Zangwill's secret influence and saw the crimson chimney.

Th-this is because he was reminded by the teacher from the Khoy University's Department of History, Azik. He possesses many secrets.

But even so, it's astounding enough for Klein to discover actual clues. It's unexplainable.

Regardless of the reason, Ince Zangwill continued to act, and the story continues.

Klein coincidently ran into Sirius at the library and had no choice but to kill him. Hence, the clues leading to Lanevus were abruptly severed, and the discovery of the problem was delayed.

...

Klein met Megose, but his spirituality stopped him from observing her closely. However, he didn't notice the subtle abnormality. That is logical. Our stories aren't made up randomly.

He searched for the red chimney, but he always opted for a route that didn't include his target. Maybe in another two or three months, when he was on the last batch, he would find the real red chimney house.

...

Rows and rows of writings were scribbled away, more than all of the previous rows added together.

Dunn Smith's problem was alleviated! His condition obviously became better! He actually mastered the "acting method!"

And this was taught to him by Klein Moretti, who found inspiration from Daly Simone and Old Neil's example. No—Ince Zangwill didn't believe that, but he could only change his original plans slightly.

New elements in the story came to play.

Azik decided to go to Backlund in search of his lost memories.

It wasn't long until Klein and Dunn found clues from Hood Eugen.

...

In order to ensure that Tingen City's Conservative Party and New Party would be in complete opposition, Madam Sharon, who wanted to vent the accumulated madness after her transformation, decided to take the risk and murder Member of Parliament John Maynard.

"Her motive wasn't strong enough, but she took action anyway. There are always times when people are not clear-minded enough, and she happened to be in that stage. Besides, she was confident that she wouldn't be discovered.

Maynard's wife found the Blackthorn Security Company through the tobacco merchant, Vickroy. They didn't disappoint her, and they quickly found Madam Sharon's abnormality.

Dunn Smith, who possessed power that was close to Sequence 6, decided to take action first. He passed the Sealed Artifact 3-0271 to Kenley.

When the two of them and Klein returned to Madam Sharon's residence, Dunn attempted to pull her into a dream to control her from a distance."

It was a good plan, but, unfortunately, Madam Sharon happened to have the statue of the Primordial Demoness by her side.

Hence, the Nighthawks' plan failed. Kenley reflected himself in the mirror due to his nervousness and saw himself.

Madam Sharon was taken care of while Kenley died. Dunn blamed himself and consumed Kenley's Beyonder characteristic as he usually did. His digestion procedure was interrupted as a result and was delayed. As such, his mental state became unstable.

Under the circumstances, Leonard and Klein noticed the letter left behind by Lanevus.

Megose received a baffling summoning and arrived at Zouteland Street. She entered the Blackthorn Security Company, and the baby in her stomach was at a critical point in its development. It couldn't stop her urges.

Dunn made a detailed plan, a plan that was right, but he made one mistake. If he steeled his resolve to lure Megose behind Chanis Gate, he would've stood a chance with the aid of the environment and the items present. If he wanted to wait for backup, he definitely shouldn't have just taken Saint Selena's urn out.

Unfortunately, Dunn's mind wasn't in the right place due to recent events, and he didn't think of the most critical point. A diety's son would be able to feel the threat of the Saint's urn. Hence, it was triggered and started to absorb its mother's strength in a bid to be born ahead of time, even though it wasn't exactly ready.

Azik was in Backlund, but he wasn't a Planeswalker, so he couldn't rush back in such short notice.

A few rows were scribbled away.

Megose became a monster, and the fight began. With the aid of the Saint's urn, Blood Vessel Thief, and two high-level charms that strangely appeared, Megose died and the deity's son was exorcized. Dunn Smith died as a result, and the power of Saint Selena's ashes was severely damaged as well. That went perfectly with Ince Zangwill's intentions.

Ince Zangwill didn't get a chance to showcase himself, but it didn't hinder him from achieving his goal.

He killed Klein Moretti, the fellow who kept disrupting his plans, and he took away Saint Selena's ashes.

Ince Zangwill set up a ritual with the remaining half of the characteristic of Death's descendant. He consumed Saint Selena's ashes and successfully advanced from Sequence 5 of the Death Sequence pathway, Gatekeeper, to Sequence 4 of the Evernight Sequence pathway, Nightwatcher. As such, he received godhood characteristics and became a Demigod.

The sun continues to shine brilliantly on the land. Nearly no one in Tingen City realized how they narrowly escaped a huge disaster. Monster Ademisaul would be left very confused about it.

The notebook was flipped to the last page. A middle-aged man that was holding onto the book had dark blond hair, a dark blue eye that was nearly black, a tall nose, and tightly pursed lips. His facial features were like that of a statue and didn't have a single wrinkle. He held a classic quill with his slightly pale hand and wrote a line clearly without dipping into any ink.

He ended with a simple sentence.

Tingen's story ends here.

The papers rustled as he closed the book, leaving only a brown cover.

CHAPTER 211: FUNERAL

In the basement of Saint Selena Cathedral, in the guardroom outside Chanis Gate.

Leonard Mitchell was leaning on the back of his chair, his legs were propped up on the table. His eyes were vacant without any focus.

Even though he had been healed using ritualistic magic, he still looked terrible, as if he had obtained reprieve from a severe illness without fully recovering.

At the moment, the powerful Beyonders sent by the Holy Cathedral were creating another seal behind the Chanis Gate since the ashes of Saint Selena was lost. They had conflicting opinions; some wanting to fill in the gap of power using a new holy item, while the others believed that there was no need to go through all the trouble. After all, to the Church of Evernight, holy items were rare and incredibly precious. What they suggested was lowering the presence of the Nighthawks in Tingen and transferring the artifacts with living characteristics or difficultto-seal artifacts to the headquarters at the Cathedral of Serenity in Backlund's diocese, only leaving behind those that could be controlled more easily.

They intended to send a telegram to propose a meeting of the higher-ups, to get a vote from the archbishops and high-ranking deacons.

Leonard was uninterested in this debate. He felt as if he had become a living corpse, with no sorrow, grief, agitation, or excitement. He was abnormally numb. He didn't want to face anyone. All he wanted was to stay alone in the corner.

Occasionally, he would feel puzzled about why the "murderer" would only take away Klein's Beyonder characteristic and leave Captain Dunn Smith's one intact.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Footsteps reverberated in the corridor. Seeka Tron, whose right arm had been bandaged, appeared at the door of the guardroom.

While Klein and the others were attacking Megose and attempting to save Tingen City, she and the Keepers within Chanis Gate were doing battle against a portion of the Sealed Artifacts. If it wasn't for the timely arrival of the members of the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind, or the eventual arrival of the reinforcements from the Holy Cathedral, she also might've lost her life.

But even so, the elderly Keeper failed to last until the end. He fought to his death, under the call of duty.

"Leonard, I found an unencrypted telegram in the Captain's office. It was sent over by the Holy Cathedral," Seeka Tron said.

Leonard's green eyes moved slightly, finally coming to life. He faintly recalled the sound of a new telegram coming in, but the battle was about to begin. He and Klein didn't have the time to pay attention to it.

"What does it say?" Leonard noticed that his tone was unusually raspy.

The white-haired and black-eyed Seeka Tron replied without hesitation, "Beware of Ince Zangwill. Beware of Sealed Artifact 0-08."

"Ince Zangwill, the archbishop that betrayed the Church, the Gatekeeper who failed his advancement... Sealed Artifact 0-08, an ordinary looking quill..." Leonard muttered at first as he searched his memories, then he tilted his head to the side.

He suddenly narrowed his eyes, the dispirited feelings and sadness disappeared from his body.

"So that's how it was..." Leonard pulled his feet back and stood up, his green eyes burning with a passion.

He looked at Seeka Tron and said, "I intend to apply to join the Red Gloves."

The Red Gloves was a code name for the elite team of Nighthawks. Under normal circumstances, Nighthawks teams were situated locally and had regions under their jurisdiction. They were not permitted to capture criminals outside of their area of jurisdiction without permission. As such, some evildoers would change their location after every crime, making it terribly inconvenient for the Nighthawks.

To deal with this, the Church of Evernight set up the Red Gloves. They were carefully selected elites, some even possessing incomplete holy items. Their mission was to reinforce Nighthawks teams that had called for help, as well as track down and arrest evildoers without any restrictions.

In some circles, they were also called "Pursuers" or "Hunting Dogs."

"Red Gloves? But their lowest requirement is Sequence 7... Besides, the dangers the Red Gloves face are many times higher than an ordinary Nighthawk Squad," Seeka Tron said in concern and doubt.

Leonard smiled coldly.

"I'm close to advancing soon."

His eyes became cold. He clenched his teeth and said to himself.

I want revenge!

Ince Zangwill, you must live until the day I become powerful enough!

"Alright..." Seeka seemed to have guessed Leonard's thoughts. She sighed. "Almost half of our team will be new faces. It's rare to see a Nighthawks team become so ravaged..."

Leonard's expression darkened. He clenched his teeth and asked, "Are the bodies ready?"

"Yes." Seeka nodded indiscernibly.

Leonard suddenly stepped towards the door.

"I'll notify their families."

I'll deal with the scene I don't want to deal with the most.

I'll do it...

...

At 2 Daffodil Street, Melissa sat on the sofa, inspecting the three tickets in her hands. She was looking at the words, the printed date, and the seat numbers.

Benson was sitting beside her, observing his sister with a smile. He had a relaxed posture.

Suddenly, they heard the doorbell. *Ding dong, ding dong.*

Melissa glanced at their busy maid Bella, then she took the three tickets with her and stood up, looking a little confused. She briskly ran to the door.

Her black hair was shinier than it was before, her face no longer skinny. The color of her skin had a ruddy color, and her brown eyes looked brighter and energetic.

Twisting the handle and opening the door, Melissa froze for a moment. She didn't recognize their visitor.

It was a young man with black hair and green eyes. He looked handsome, but his face was unusually pale. Hidden in his eyes was deep sorrow.

"May I know who you are?" Melissa asked, feeling somewhat lost.

Leonard had specially draped a black formal coat over his white shirt. He said in a raspy voice, "I'm a colleague of your brother Klein.

Melissa's heart suddenly skipped a beat. She instinctively tiptoed to look behind Leonard but didn't notice anything.

She said with a strange quiver in her voice, "Where's Klein?"

Leonard closed his eyes, inhaling as he said, "I'm very sorry, your brother Klein died at the hands of an evil criminal while he was trying to save others. He's a hero, a true hero."

Melissa widened her eyes slowly, her body shaking indiscernibly. The three tickets in her hands dropped helplessly onto the floor.

The tickets faced upward, revealing the name of the play—"The Return of the Count."

...

Sitting in the Moretti family's living room, Leonard didn't dare to look directly at Melissa and Benson.

But he couldn't stop scenes of what they looked like from flashing through his mind.

That girl filled with youthfulness and vibrancy had her eyes wide open. She didn't speak, and her eyes were unfocused. Her silence made her appear like a puppet.

The man who looked a little like Klein maintained a normal posture, but he would slip into a daze from time to time. His words came out slowly.

"That's the gist of the matter. I'm very sorry that I was unable to prevent it in a timely manner. The Blackthorn Security Company, the police department, and those that he helped have promised a bereavement compensation of about 6000 pounds..." Leonard said, as his eyes darted around.

Suddenly, Benson interrupted him. His voice was hoarse as he asked, "Where's his body? I'm asking where's Klein's body?" He puckered his lips and paused.

"When can we see him?"

"In the company. You can see him now," Leonard answered, unable to mask his grief.

"Alright." Benson moved his rigid lips with great difficulty. "Let me use the bathroom first."

Without waiting for Leonard's reply, he quickly entered the bathroom and slammed the door closed.

He stood in front of the sink and turned on the tap, allowing the water to flow.

He bent down and repeatedly splashed water onto his face.

As he did that, his actions came to a sudden stop. Nothing changed for a long time, leaving only the sound of running water reverberating in the bathroom.

A few minutes later, Benson lifted his head and looked into the mirror. He saw that his face was covered in water droplets, the redness in his eyes was impossible to hide now.

...

A few days later, in a corner of the Raphael Cemetery.

After finishing Dunn's funeral, the crowd gathered before a new tombstone. On it was Klein's black-and-white photograph, a very scholarly photograph.

Melissa stood before the grave, her eyes without focus. Beside her, Elizabeth kept wiping away her tears.

Leonard, Benson, Frye, and Bredt carried the coffin and walked over, lowering the coffin into the grave.

After the priest gave the eulogy and individual prayers, the grave was filled with soil, covering the black coffin bit by bit.

At this moment, Melissa knelt down and tossed in the copper whistle she found on her brother's body.

Leonard turned and looked at the scene, his heart wincing. However, he admired how strong this girl was. He knew that this girl didn't cry after receiving the bad news. Instead, she stayed pitifully quiet.

The grave was leveled and a stone slab was laid over it. Leonard took a final look at Klein's tombstone. There were three lines to his epitaph:

The best elder brother, The best younger brother, The best colleague.

Under the mournful atmosphere, the members of the Blackthorn Security Company gradually left. Selena and Elizabeth also bade farewell under the urging of their families. The only people left behind were Benson and Melissa.

"I'll get a rental carriage..." Benson was in a terrible condition, it was as if he hadn't slept for a long time.

"Alright." Melissa nodded.

After seeing her brother leave, she turned to look at the tombstone.

She squatted down and buried her face in her arms.

After some silence, Melissa suddenly scolded, "Stupid!" She cried as she wept silently. Her tears just

wouldn't stop.

...

Night time, at the Raphael Cemetery.

The copper-skinned Azik stood in front of Klein's grave holding a bouquet of white flowers. He didn't speak for the longest time until he finally sighed and muttered to himself, "I'm sorry, I was ten minutes late. But I think I know who it was..."

He bent over and set the bouquet of flowers down before turning to leave the cemetery. He also left Tingen, but he didn't retrieve the copper whistle.

The place was quiet and serene under the illumination of the crimson moonlight.

Suddenly, the stone slab sealing the grave was flipped open. A pale hand extended out from the soil.

A hand came out!

Whoosh!

The gravestone was shoved aside. The lid of the coffin was pushed open. Klein sat upright and looked around, lost.

His memory was still frozen at the scene with the brand new leather boots, and the palm that grabbed onto the urn of Saint Selena's ashes. Everything after that felt like a dreamless sleep.

Klein instinctively lowered his head and unbuttoned his shirt. He looked at the left side of his chest, only to see that his ravaged injury and missing heart were squirming as they healed, similar to how he recovered from the bullet wound through his temple back when he looked into the mirror. The only difference was that this time, the recovery was much slower and much more difficult.

In the northern part of the Loen Kingdom, the September breeze, that had an additional coldness to it, howled through the cemetery. It was even gloomier and colder than usual.

The cold jolted Klein back to his senses as he muttered with a rueful smile, “It looks like there are still some secrets behind my transmigration...

“But it seems like I’ll only be able to resurrect another two times at most, not any more... And if I were to minced up or completely crushed, who knows if this recovery ability that doesn’t usually appear would even be useful...”

...

After half a minute, Klein buttoned his suit and realized that he was wearing his newest shirt and tuxedo, but they were now covered in soil and dirt.

...Benson and Melissa really have no idea how to save money... The thought popped into his head. He supported his weight on his hand and flipped up into a standing position, realizing that he still had his Clown abilities.

The best elder brother... The best younger brother... The best colleague... Klein looked at his tombstone and read the inscription. He felt his heart wince, seemingly sensing the despondent feelings Melissa and Benson had experienced.

This is probably even more depressing than watching Captain die before my eyes... He sighed and retracted his gaze. He squatted down and closed the coffin lid.

His thoughts were still scattered, but Klein knew that he had to take care of the scene as soon as possible and not let anyone notice.

Resurrection wasn’t something any commoner could accept!

If the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind learned of this, Klein believed that he wouldn’t have a great ending. Of course, if it was on Earth, he could deceive the people into believing that he was the blessed one of God, the man of salvation, had he consumed the Lawyer or Swindler potions. However, in the world he was in, there was a real god, a real god that could respond to rituals!

He scraped the soil back together and covered it with the stone slab. Klein clapped his hands and stood up once again.

At that moment, the scene didn’t appear strange. He was just like a gentleman who came to offer his condolences late at night. The only oddity was that the person in the photo on the tombstone looked exactly like him.

During the process of filling his grave, his spirituality noticed the existence of Azik’s copper whistle. Hence, he dug it out and wiped it clean.

However, Klein didn’t intend to summon the messenger immediately. He decided to figure out the situation first.

Klein lifted his left hand and saw the topaz pendant that was still wrapped around his wrist.

“I guess this is considered a burial object?” He gave a selfdeprecating laugh and took off the pendulum. He looked around, and his face grew solemn. “...Captain should be buried in this cemetery as well, I guess...”

He changed directions twice and finally determined the location of Dunn’s tombstone using the pendulum.

With the moonlight's aid, Klein walked around and searched for about fifteen minutes until he finally saw Captain's monochrome photo. It had a gentle expression, high hairline, gray eyes—nothing unusual compared to before.

Under Dunn's photo was his name, date of birth, date of death, and epitaph.

The true guardian,

The most trusted partner, The Captain forever.

Klein looked in stunned silence and somehow his sight grew blurry for some baffling reason. He felt as though he had returned to that day again. He saw the Captain turn his head to him and wink. He spoke with a mellow and relaxed voice.

"We saved Tingen."

Captain... Klein shouted in silence.

He stood there like a statue for a good few minutes until he suddenly said with a smile, "Captain, your mental state was definitely not the best that day. You even said things like you could bring Old Neil into the dreamland if he hadn't lost control. He was a Mystery Pryer, and you're a Nightmare. You couldn't consume the Beyonder characteristic that he left behind. Yes... You didn't ask me what powerful offensive attacks I had. Was it trust, or did you forget about it... But, you definitely guessed something... I only took one Sealed Artifact and said it was for Leonard. Even without a brain, you could've guessed that I had the extra means for a powerful attack."

Having said that, Klein paused, then he shook his head and sighed.

"I have no idea what I am now. Maybe I'm just an evil spirit that has clawed its way back from hell to seek revenge..."

As he spoke, he suddenly stopped. His tears streamed down his cheeks and finally, he shouted softly with a choking voice, "Captain... We miss you too!"

Klein felt the cold breeze blow past him as he lifted his hands to wipe his tears and blow his nose.

He became silent again and found a hidden spot nearby. He took four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog.

He wanted to find the person that killed him with the aid of divination. He wanted to know the murderer who triggered all of this!

As he's already appeared before me, I'm sure that I can divine some information... Klein pursed his lips tightly together and saw the lofty palace and ancient mottled table as usual.

He took the seat that belonged to The Fool. A yellowish-brown goatskin and fountain pen appeared before him.

Since his physical body in reality was under limited protection, Klein didn't delay and wrote down his divination statement after a moment's thought.

"The person who killed me."

He recited it seven times and leaned back into the chair. He entered his dream with the aid of Cogitation.

In the blurry world, there were countless points of light dancing and gathering. In the end, they formed a scene.

A pair of brand new leather boots, a pair of slightly pale hands, and the Saint Selena's urn that was held by those hands.

He looked up, and Klein saw a middle-aged man with short, dark blond hair.

He wore a black two-button suit, and one of his eyes was obviously blind while the other one was so blue that it was almost black. His facial features were like carvings, and his face had no wrinkles at all.

The image shattered and Klein woke up from his dream. His eyebrows were tightly knitted. He found his murderer very familiar.

As a Seer, he quickly understood why he found the person familiar. It was because he had seen the man's photo on a wanted notice!

The murderer was Ince Zangwill! He was the former Archbishop of the Church of Evernight who took Sealed Artifact 0-08. He had failed to advance as a Gatekeeper!

"It's him!" Countless images flashed through Klein's head, and they finally stopped on the scene when Ince Zangwill picked up Saint Selena's urn.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein extended his hands and rapped the edge of the long bronze table. He felt that he suddenly understood many things.

"The Captain said that a Beyonder that dies normally would leave behind a Beyonder characteristic. When gathered together, they're equivalent to a potion that lacks the supplementary ingredients.

"In other words, as long as one knows the corresponding supplementary ingredients, they can advance using "remains". Of course, one cannot consume beyond their level, as it would easily lead to a loss of control or going insane.

"Hmm... Becoming a High-Sequence Beyonder would require the accompaniment of some special ritual. That was mentioned in the incomplete Unshadowed formula... The subsequent advancements would require a ritual as well...

"Ince Zangwill is a Gatekeeper, a Sequence 5 from the Death Sequence pathway. He wanted to become a High-Sequence Beyonder, a Demigod. Based on the situation allowed by the exchanging of Sequences, he had three choices. One was obviously Sequence 4 in the Death Sequence pathway, second was Sequence 4 in the Sleepless Sequence pathway; and third was Sequence 4 in the God of Combat Sequence pathway, Demon Hunter.

"Saint Selena was a Saint. She was either Sequence 4 or Sequence 3. Her urn corresponds to one of the two Sequence potions... Ince Zangwill, who was a former Archbishop, definitely knew exactly which one she was, and he definitely knew the required supplementary ingredients...

"Was his true motive in planning all of this to get Saint Selena's ashes and advance to Sequence 4 in the Sleepless pathway?

"Hmm, the skull of Death's descendant, that might be an ingredient needed for the special ritual. It was from the Death Sequence pathway, after all.

"From the looks of it, his target was the Captain, and not me. He really was the mastermind behind all this..."

Having figured this out, Klein wrote down a corresponding divination statement. He took his pendulum and let the topaz hang above the surface of the paper.

After he recited the statement, he opened his eyes and saw the topaz pendant spinning clockwise.

It meant that the information he provided was sufficient, and the divination was successful!

It meant that Ince Zangwill had really plotted the series of events in order to get Saint Selena's ashes, to advance to Sequence 4!

Klein rapped on the edge of the table again as he mulled over a different question.

“Ince Zangwill was merely a Sequence 5 Gatekeeper. Relying on him alone, would make it impossible for him to create so many coincidences. For instance, for Megose to follow his “arrangements” and visit the Nighthawks at the correct time.

“So, is it the power of Sealed Artifact 0-08?

“Its appearance is that of an ordinary quill... Its function is to write down events that are bound to happen?

“No, it couldn’t be that easy... Otherwise, Ince Zangwill could write that Saint Selena’s urn grew a pair of wings and flew into his hands. Then, he could’ve just waited at home...

“There must be certain restrictions...

“0-08 most likely doesn’t possess direct combat ability. Otherwise, Ince Zangwill could’ve stormed through Chanis Gate in Tingen...

“As one of the most dangerous Sealed Artifacts, perhaps it can let people act according to its description without realizing it? That was the reason behind all the coincidences?

“If that’s really true, then 0-08 is quite terrifying. Even Megose who was pregnant with the son of an evil god adhered to its arrangements... No wonder Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts are ‘Extremely Dangerous.’ They’re of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. They’re not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied...”

Klein stopped rapping the edge of the table. He divined his earlier guess, but, unfortunately, it failed due to a lack of information.

He saw that a few minutes had passed, and he planned to return to the real world as soon as possible. Hence, he didn’t let his thoughts run wild but wrote down the penultimate divination statement.

“The city where Ince Zangwill currently is.”

Due to the existence of Sealed Artifact 0-08 and the fact that Ince Zangwill had likely become a Demigod, Klein couldn’t divine his exact location directly. He could only make a rough inquiry of the general area.

Of course, if there wasn’t a mysterious space like the world above the gray fog to eliminate disturbances, he would definitely fail in divination, even if it was a rough inquiry.

He leaned against the high-back chair and recited the divination statement seven times. He dreamed again and entered the blurry world.

The blurry world suddenly cracked, and there was a wide river which was slightly murky.

There was a grand bridge above the river. Both banks had ports lined one after another. There were many goods and many workers.

To the northeast of the river, there were rows upon rows of houses. Most of them had the Loen Kingdom’s present-day architectural styles, such as polygenic roofs, oriel windows, and no verandah by the street. Other than that, there was a lot of Gothic architecture.

The streets were filled with people and carriages. From time to time, strange machinery could be seen.

The farther east he went, the more chimneys there were and the smokier it got. When he headed west, the elevation rose, and there were houses in grayish-blue, beige, and light yellow that spiraled up opulent castles and Gothic clock towers.

Gong!

The chime of a clock sounded and snapped Klein back to his senses. He knew which city he had seen.

The “Land of Hope,” and the “Capital of Capitals,” Backlund!

So Ince Zangwill has gone to Backlund... I wonder how long he'll stay there... Yes... I should confirm this every now and then... Klein leaned forward as he thought. He erased the contents on the goatskin and wrote a new divination statement:

"Lanevus's current location."

From his point of view, the person that caused the Captain and him to nearly die was undoubtedly Ince Zangwill, but the lunatic Lanevus was definitely an accomplice who cannot shirk from the responsibility. He had to pay the price in blood!

After reciting the statement seven times, Klein once again entered the dream. But the scene that appeared after the foggy world shattered was the same as the one he had seen before!

A wide, slightly murky river, countless piers and buildings. The buildings were primarily in the present Loen architectural style, some a little more Gothic. There were crowded streets, flourishing sights, chimneys that continually spewed smoke. There were opulent castles standing tall with the trademark Gothic clock towers...

Lanevus was also in the "Land of Hope," the "Capital of Capitals," Backlund!

Klein opened his eyes, a little confused. He had divined for Lanevus's specific location, but the results were still a very general, vague region.

This tells me that Lanevus's Sequence must be much higher than I imagined... No, it could also be that he's received a large benefit from helping the son of the True Creator descend upon this world. For example, a little godhood characteristics, or some object similar to the placenta left behind by Megose's baby? Hmm... The latter would most likely have been taken away by Ince Zangwill. Thoughts ran through Klein's mind as he muttered to himself whilst he made initial assumptions.

After confirming the rough area where both his enemies were, he thought about another problem. He still didn't have the ability to exact revenge!

Even if Lanevus is only a Sequence 7, or even 8, it wouldn't be easy to deal with him if he did indeed receive a large benefit. Lanevus is also obviously very crafty, he could outwit and defeat Beyonders more powerful than himself... Ince Zangwill is even more terrifying. He's a Sequence 4 Demigod, and he wields a powerful Grade 0 Sealed Artifact... Although there were some secrets surrounding my transmigration, it's clear that I can't convert those secrets into combat strength. It's likely that it's not possible for a very long period of time... The only means that I have are to continue raising my Sequence, or I could collect even more powerful mystical items. I have to use both the methods at the same time...

In between his thoughts, Klein decided to add another divination.

He deliberated on the statement before writing solemnly, "My opportunities of becoming powerful."

He gently placed the pen on the table and leaned back, then he closed his eyes.

He recited the statement silently and fell into a deep sleep with the help of Cogitation.

In the foggy world, he once again saw the scene that he had previously seen. The river, piers, chimneys, crowds, castles, various machinery, and Gothic clock towers. He had once again seen the capital of the Loen Kingdom, Backlund!

Immediately following that, the scene changed. He saw a magnificent peak piercing through the clouds, and, on it, he saw a majestic, ancient palace. He saw the giant throne carved from stone, adorned with dull gems and gold. He saw a strange vertical pupil formed from countless mysterious symbols.

The scene shattered silently without warning. Klein slowly sat up and tapped on the edge of the table with his fingers.

Backlund contains the opportunities for me to become powerful...

Does the second scene refer to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, the treasures left behind by the Antigonus family? The strange vertical pupil formed by countless mysterious symbols which the Misfortune Cloth Puppet conveyed to me through the corruption from the Antigonus family's notebook is the key to beginning all of this...

Many thoughts flashed through his mind. Klein decided that he was in no rush to visit the Hornacis mountain range. Even a Sequence 4 Demigod might not be able to deal with the dangers that resided there.

I guess I'll head to Backlund first... Klein sighed and made a decision. He enveloped himself with spirituality and stimulated a descent, exiting the mysterious space above the gray fog.

When he returned to the material world, he slowly walked out of his hiding spot towards Dunn Smith's grave.

He stared deeply at the picture and epitaph. Klein slowly drew a crimson moon on his chest and walked out of the cemetery.

As a former Nighthawk, a Nighthawk who had to regularly patrol Raphael Cemetery, he was quite familiar with the routes of the guards, as well its surroundings. He managed to leave the cemetery easily, without causing any alarm. He followed the gravel road into Tingen, using the shade of the trees as cover.

The night was peaceful and the moon was ever-so dreamy. Klein walked alone, his thoughts running wild and unbridled. He sometimes considered his plan for revenge, sometimes thinking back to the times he spent with the Captain, sometimes recalling Old Neil's hidden grief beneath his humorous facade...

Unknowingly, Klein had entered the nearest street like a wandering ghost, making his way past turn after turn.

It was two hours later when he freed himself from that state and regained complete control of his thoughts.

He realized that he was standing on Daffodil Street. Opposite him was the house he shared with his brother and sister.

Instinctively, Klein had returned here.

He took a step forward with clear joy, but suddenly paused. He let out a bitter smile and muttered with a self-deprecating tone, "If I went up and knocked on the door, Melissa might faint from shock... Benson would be so nervous his hair would start to drop.

He would then try his best to calmly convince me, in the name of a curly-haired baboon..."

Shaking his head, Klein stared at the familiar door for a while before heading towards Iron Cross Street.

This is fine too, this is fine too... The things that I do in the future will not implicate them. The compensation given to them by the Nighthawks team and the police department will be enough for them to live a stable middle-class life, even if Melissa fails to find a job and Benson loses his job...

Klein walked silently for a moment before starting to feel fatigue. But, as someone who was "dead," he didn't have any other belongings on him except for the clothes he was wearing, his topaz pendulum, and Azik's copper whistle. He didn't have pounds, nor soli, nor pennies.

Should I give the whistle a blow to send a letter to Mr. Azik and get him to help me? Klein laughed optimistically. *Forget it, I shouldn't contact him for the time being. Perhaps Ince Zangwill is still keeping him under surveillance. I'll look for him when the time is right... To an old monster who has lived countless lives for thousands of year, he should be able to understand resurrection... At least it's not too cold tonight. I'll make do by finding a place to sleep for the time being and head to the Tingen branch of the Backlund Bank tomorrow morning to retrieve the money in the anonymous account.*

As there had been too many things to do lately. Klein hadn't had the time to start on the experiments involving the sacrificial ritual. He hadn't touched the 300 pounds in the anonymous account either.

That should be enough to support my expenses for quite a while. I'll buy a newspaper tomorrow to confirm what day it is... Miss Justice and the others didn't make any new prayers, which means that I didn't miss a gathering... Klein thought as he found a spot that had no wind. He sat down and took off his jacket. He used it as a blanket and leaned on the wall to sleep.

It wasn't long into his sleep when he was suddenly woken by someone. He saw a policeman wielding a baton.

He only had a single chevron on his epaulet, the lowest-ranking police constable... Klein glanced at him to ascertain his identity.

The policeman said fiercely, "You can't sleep here!

"The streets and parks aren't for you lazy, jobless vagrants to sleep in!

"Those are the terms in the Poor Law!"

Is that so? Klein froze. Given his sensitive identity, he didn't argue with the policeman.

He grabbed his jacket and continued walking until daybreak.

Soon after, he lowered his head and entered the Tingen branch of the Backlund Bank. He took out 200 pounds with the password he had set, leaving behind a third of the money as "savings," in case of any emergencies.

Without a doubt, Klein heard "prayers" when he wrote the password in ancient Hermes.

Klein then spent 38 pounds on two sets of formal wear, two shirts, two trousers, two pairs of leather boots, two bow ties, four pairs of socks, as well as two thick double-breasted jackets, two solid colored fur coats, and two pairs of thick trousers in preparation for the winter. He also bought a cane, a wallet, and a leather luggage bag.

After completing his purchase, Klein found a hotel to wash up and change in. He rented a private carriage directly to the train station in Tingen in order to avoid meeting anyone familiar. Along the way, he purchased a newspaper and discovered that it was Sunday.

It took about four hours to get from Tingen to Backlund by train. A luxurious first-class seat cost about three-quarters of a pound, or 15 soli. A second-class seat cost 10 soli, or half a pound.

The packed, poorly-maintained third-class seats were rather cheap at only 5 soli.

Klein thought for a moment before buying a seat for the two o'clock train, a second-class seat.

Klein found a random spot to sit in the waiting area with his ticket and luggage in hand. It was only slightly after nine in the morning.

He was happy that the Loen Kingdom didn't have a strict census. He could prove his identity just by using the water and gas bills, as well as his rent for the past three months. Purchasing a train ticket was even easier, as all he needed was money.

Klein suddenly had an empty feeling in his heart as he was sitting there, thinking about how he was about to leave for Backlund from Tingen in the afternoon.

He thought about his sister who always gave him a motherly vibe. He thought about his brother who liked to crack cold jokes. He thought about how they would fill their stomachs up so much that they wouldn't feel like moving...

Recalling these scenes, Klein suddenly laughed. He laughed bitterly, for he thought about the tortoise that Melissa called a "puppet," as well as Benson's pitiful hairline.

He suddenly had a strong urge. He wanted to see his siblings again.

At this moment, Klein suddenly realized why he hadn't picked an earlier train but instead bought a ticket for the two o'clock train.

He carried his luggage and left the waiting area quickly, taking a rented carriage back to Daffodil Street.

He then hid in a shady area on the opposite side and looked at the door to his house. There were many times when he felt like heading over, but he couldn't bring himself to cross the wide street.

Klein looked across the road in a daze, suddenly having a feeling of homelessness. He'd had a similar feeling when he had just transmigrated.

Suddenly, he saw the door to the house open as Melissa and Benson came out.

Melissa was wearing a black dress and black veiled hat. Benson was in a shirt, vest, trousers, coat, and hat, all in black. They both had numb, sullen expressions.

Melissa has become skinnier... Why is Benson so haggard... Klein's heart winced in pain. He opened his mouth but couldn't shout out their names.

Without realizing it, he followed Benson and Melissa to the nearest municipal square. He saw that tents had been erected there again. A new circus troupe was in town for a performance.

Benson took out some money and purchased the entrance tickets and led Melissa into the circus. He forced a smile.

"This circus troupe is very famous."

Melissa nodded without expression.

"Okay."

Suddenly, she slipped and almost fell.

Klein, who was also buying a ticket, opened his mouth. He wanted to help his sister, but he could only retract the hand he had instinctively extended and stood helplessly in the busy crowd.

Benson jumped in fright, but he was too late to help. However, Melissa quickly steadied herself. She puckered her lips and said nothing.

At this moment, clowns swarmed forward, some performing balancing acts on wheels or large rubber balls, others tossing countless tennis balls into the air, then ridiculously catching every one of them.

Melissa seemed to disregard the clowns as she looked at the performance. Benson tried to lift his sister's spirits by cheering, but he didn't succeed. He slowly turned sullen too.

Klein puckered his lips tightly as he watched this scene from afar. He wanted to approach them, but he didn't dare to.

Suddenly, he touched the wallet in his jacket and had an idea.

Benson and Melissa continued walking forward, silently watching the various performances.

Some time later, they saw a clown running towards them. His face was painted in colorful pastels. At first, he threw a tennis ball into the air, and, while the attention of the surrounding people was drawn to the air, he conjured a flower out of thin air. It was a Seville Chrysanthemum.

The clown brought the flower before Melissa and Benson. The flower was golden in color and symbolized happiness.

Melissa and Benson looked at the clown in a daze. All they saw was a wide smile plastered over the pastel face. It was a happy smile, an exaggerated smile, a ridiculous smile.

Author Notes:

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for your appreciation and subscription. I should have made a speech at the end of June, but I think the first one will be finished soon. I can write it together and wait until today.

This man, in his thirties, his energy, especially his mind, has really dropped a lot. At the time of the Throne of Magical Arcana, I wrote five chapters and 15,000 chapters a day, just like beating chicken blood. However, since the latter part of my life, I have written three chapters a day at most. Besides sleeping and eating, I was thinking about the plot and writing stories. As a result, I had abnormal mental states such as anxiety and depression. I was also able to adjust to it in time. At that time, I had old physical problems and stayed in the hospital for half a month.

Therefore, we can only compromise with our physical and mental conditions, one chapter in the morning, one chapter in the afternoon, rest in the evening, keep healthy, and then leave two copies to keep the update on time, avoid anxiety, and consider writing three chapters only when we are in good condition and have a clear mind.

In June, I can honestly say that my dog's life is for the manuscript... For a whole month, I didn't write three chapters for more than four days, and the rest depended on saving my manuscript. At last, the saved manuscript fell to the bottom line of two.

Well, I can only reluctantly say that let's win by the quality...

With the update, it is the summary of the first book. Basically, what should be expressed has been expressed. The title of "Clown" runs through the whole situation. Hehe, you can look back at the testimony. I said that the various structures of this book are the most comprehensive I have considered, and they echo each other before and after. We will wait and see. Well, I think they are qualified.

The first one I've never tried before is written as a short story and medium story, with the overall consideration of embedding thread and layout design. Of course, the foreshadowing of the full text will certainly remain. In short, judging from the current results, the attempt is still successful, which is gratifying.

On the character, haha, I will not say more, or you'll be sent a blade...

Of course, there is some dissatisfaction. First, when the "party", "event", "practice" and "daily" began to show a fixed cycle, my feeling of writing decreased, and I believe the reading feeling was the same. Therefore, I tried to jump off the timeline, and after jumping, the initial cut was relatively crude, but gradually improved. Second, after the death of Old Neil, the overall tone showed the original gray, and then I cut into daily life, I feel a bit wrong, so I deleted some of the scheduled plots and speeded up the progress.

Secretly I set around six to eight books. The volume name of each book will be the name of the sequence, but it is not necessarily Klein's "Seer" pathway. It mainly depends on the theme or metaphor of the book.

Finally, the first part is finished. According to the usual practice, we need to take a leave of absence and rest, sort out the outline, find the second entry point, and work out the general plot. Well, rest for a day and a half, and resume the update at noon the day after tomorrow. Also, I will update some data of "0-08" on the Weixin Gongzhong later. It is not related to the work, but I afraid that the new readers will see it, and the first part will lose half of the fun. I will build a Sealed Artifacts form in the book

review area. If you have any idea about the Sealed Artifacts, you can use it there. Maybe they will adopt, well, try not to copy the SCP foundation. By the way, the second book is the “Faceless”, please look forward to it

Also, after self-praise and self-criticism, shouldn’t everyone encourage with the monthly ticket?

To be continued in…

Lord Of Mysteries

Faceless

Amid waves of steam and machinery,
who could rise to achieve the extraordinary?

Through the fog of history and the veil of darkness,
whose voice whispered in the shadows?

I awoke from the realm of mysteries
and opened my eyes to the world.

Firearms, cannons, battleships,
airships, and calculating machines.

Potions, divination, curses, the hanged man,
and sealed relics of power...

The lights blazed brightly,
yet the world's deepest secrets were never far from reach.

This is the legend of the "Fool."

Lord Of Mysteries